



**CONVERSATIONS  
WITH  
CHRIST**

**BISHOP NEWMAN**

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# Conversations

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with Christ

By

John Philip Newman, D.D., LL.D.

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of "Thrones and Palaces of Babylon and Nineveh;" "From  
Dan to Beersheba;" "Christianity Triumphant;"  
"Supremacy of Law;" etc., etc.



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DEDICATED

TO

THE HONORABLE MATTHEW G. EMERY

*The President of the Board of Trustees of the  
Metropolitan Memorial Methodist Epis-  
copal Church, Washington, D. C.*

from its organization, and the only surviving trustee of the  
original Board

He was an honorary pallbearer at BISHOP-NEWMAN'S  
funeral, Saratoga, July 8, 1899





## INTRODUCTION

---

EXECUTIVE MANSION,  
WASHINGTON.

The publication of the writings of  
Bishop Newman will continue  
his influence for good, and will  
be an incentive to a lofty Christian  
manhood, so well exemplified  
in his own life

William M. G. Miller  
January 15, 1900.



The following is the last official invitation proffered

BISHOP NEWMAN.

It was beautifully embossed and forwarded to San Francisco, California, his episcopal residence, but did not reach Saratoga (his summer home) until after he had passed from earth. It reads thus:

---

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT BUILDING,  
CHICAGO.

TO BISHOP JOHN P. NEWMAN.

Greeting :

The people of Chicago request the honor of your presence to assist the President in the ceremonies of laying the corner stone of the United States Government Building in that city, on Monday, October ninth, eighteen hundred and ninety-nine.

JOHN P. TANNER,                      CARTER H. HARRISON,  
*Governor of Illinois.*                      *Mayor of Chicago.*

CHARLES U. GORDON,                      WILLIAM P. WILLIAMS,  
*Chairman Gen. Com.*                      *Secretary Gen. Com.*

PETER STENGER GROSSCUP,                      THOS. C. MACMILLAN,  
*Chairman Inv. Com.*                      *Secretary Inv. Com.*



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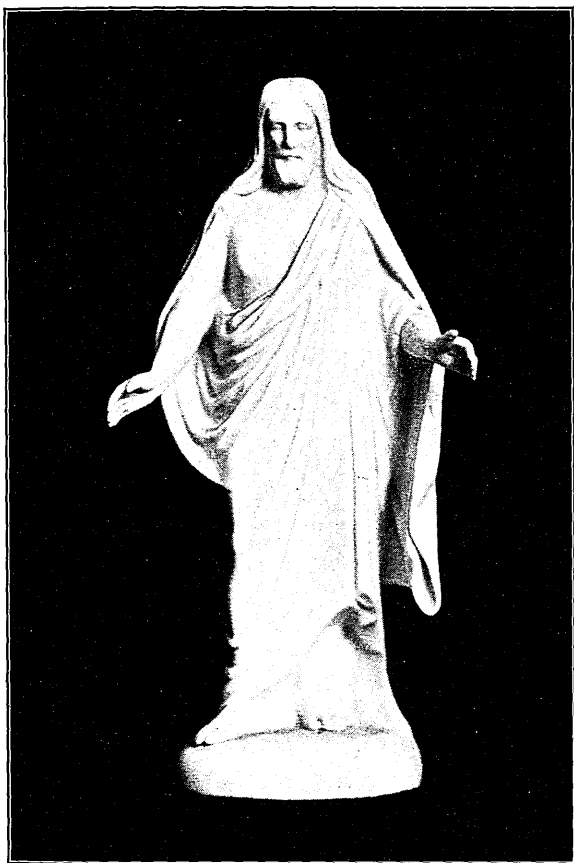
NO one can adequately analyze the character of Christ. Even St. Paul, in all the grandeur of his diction, could not. We must leave the equation with the Almighty.

---

CHRIST'S biography would have to be written with an alphabet, the alpha of which no human voice ever repeated, the omega of which no mortal tongue would ever know how to speak.

---

"JESUS CHRIST the same yesterday and forever."



THORWALDSEN'S STATUE OF CHRIST.

*This was taken from the original statue.*





## STATUE OF CHRIST

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FROM Bishop Newman's journal we take the following paragraph: "In Rome, hard by the Capitoline Hill, is a little church, and in that church is one of the most marvelous products of the chisel. It is Thorwaldsen's statue of Christ. Into his studio he brought a piece of Parian marble, which was without form or comeliness. Folding his arms upon his breast, he looked upon that uncomely marble, and in his mind there was the ideal of a marble Christ, such as never was in the imagination of any other artist; then with chisel and hammer he began his work. At first the work was rough, but as the sculptor advanced hope inspired genius to the finishing touches. When the form was finished, half doubtful of his success, he threw a canvas over it. He must have a test, when it occurred to him to call his little girl, whom he had brought up in the admonition of the Lord—but had never seen the statue; sud-

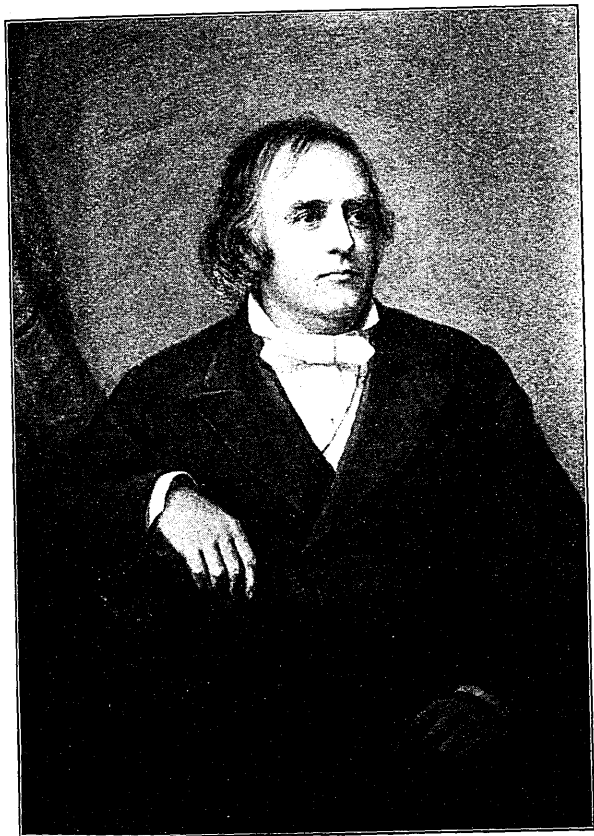
denly unvailing the figure, he caught the little girl in his arms, and asked, 'My child, who is that?' The blue eyes of the little one gazed with rapture upon the marvelous piece of statuary, and then folding her tiny hands in adoring admiration, exclaimed, 'I do not know exactly, my father, but it seems so like our Saviour!'

"It is a wonderful work and fills the world of art with admiration.

"The veritable Christ was in touch with the child life.

"If, therefore, I would help to enthrone Christ in the world, I must first enthrone him in my own heart and life, and thus become a living, walking, talking Christ."





*John P. Newman*

This portrait has never before appeared. It is taken from the large oil painting by Theodore Pine in the gallery of portraits in the chapel at 150 Fifth Avenue, New York City. At the age of fifty-eight years.



## SALUTATION

---

GREAT men are distinguished for their conversations. The eminent expounders of law, philosophy, and religion have been colloquial in their best estates. The colloquies of Zoroaster contain the substance of all that was taught by that wonderful man. It was the habit of the venerable Buddha to sit beneath the shade trees of India and converse with his disciples, and the contents of the sacred books of the Buddhists are the expressions of those interviews. In familiar intercourse with his followers Confucius taught his moral and philosophical theories, now esteemed divine throughout the Celestial Empire. And the classical scholar recalls the dialogues of Plato in the Academy, the face-to-face discussions of Socrates in the Agora, the sayings of Aristotle of Stageira, and the discourses of the peripatetic philosophers who taught their pupils in the streets of Athens and along the highways of Greece.

More than a hundred interviews between Christ and the people are recorded by his four biographers. Some are brief—a question and an answer; others were continued for a night.

They were held with kings, priests, and judges; with friends and foes; with scoffers and inquirers; with individuals and multitudes; with God, angels, and devils. These writers have transmitted to us six hundred and twenty of his discourses; some brief like a monosyllable, as "Go," "Come," "Ephphatha;" the longest contains two thousand four hundred and thirty-nine words. Not less than three hundred and thirty-one addresses were made to him, many of them of a word, as "Master," "Legion," "No;" and one of a hundred and thirty-four words, which fell from the lips of his astonished friends whom he chanced to meet on the way to Emmaus. More than a hundred questions were asked him, full of thoughts common to us all, relating to his origin, age, person, character, and mission; others to human duty, character, destiny, life, death, and immortality; not a few of them projected far into the future, to angels, good and bad; to our departed friends, where are they, their employment, and their return to us. Such questions have vexed the souls of the wisest and best of our race, and vex us to-day. Would that he had answered them. Did he throw more light on these dark problems than another? Dear friends, give me your thoughtful, prayerful attention in the following conversations:

# CONVERSATIONS WITH CHRIST

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## I

### CHRIST'S CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DOCTORS AND WITH HIS MOTHER

"My son, I have sought thee sorrowing."

"How is it that ye sought me?"—Luke ii, 48, 49.

"Both hearing them and asking them questions."—Luke ii, 46.

SOME master mind is yet to give to the world a monograph upon the intellect of Christ. The splendor of his moral character has thrown into the shade the magnificence of his intellectuality. At the time his parents brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, St. Luke writes, the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. Later St. John writes that even his enemies said: "Never spake man like this man." St. Paul declares that "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" and again to the Corinthians:



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“Cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” What a monograph it would be could one be devoted to the thought life of Jesus! In his discourses and parables and conversations he condensed all truth and illustrated all virtues and vices.

Professor Sayce, in his recent work on “The Monuments,” has made the bold statement that the age of Moses was the most intellectual in the history of the world. The best of the Greeks were accustomed to go to the University of On, on the banks of the Nile, when Egypt was the intellectual center of the world.

It is equally true that Palestine was renowned for its universities. There was one at Jerusalem, one at Safet, and one at Tiberias. The one in Jerusalem was the most renowned. It is a thought as beautiful as true that St. Paul, John the Baptist, John the beloved disciple, and the young Messiah were contemporaries; and we have good reason for asserting that they were all students in the university at Jerusalem. St. Paul sat at the feet of Gamaliel and was in the department of law, while the other three were students of rabbinical jurisprudence.

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The boy Jesus was not inclined to return to Nazareth with his parents, and was subsequently found, after three days, in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions, and all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. Would that somewhere amid buried or hidden archives these questions and answers might come to the light of our day inscribed on parchment, scroll, or papyrus!

His was a miraculous birth; his mother was a Jewish virgin, his father was God. Born in the reign of Herod the Great, his birthplace was Bethlehem, a quiet little Jewish city nestling amid the everlasting hills. At the age of eight days he was circumcised, and received his significant name Jesus the Saviour of mankind. Thirty-two days thereafter he was carried to Jerusalem and presented to the high priest, according to the Levitical law.

Twelve years now passed away, and we again hear of Jesus and the holy family. We are indebted to St. Luke for this fragment of history in the form of a biographical sketch. His parents, thoroughly Jewish in their faith and profound in their religious convictions, annually visited Jerusalem to celebrate the passover. Whether Jesus had gone with

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them on former occasions is not stated. But on the anniversary of his twelfth year he accompanied them, and after they had remained, according to the Jewish custom, eight days in the city, the family in company with a vast caravan of travelers returned to Nazareth. Probably Joseph and Mary had reached Shiloh, a good day's journey from the Holy City, when, as the shades of night gathered around them, Mary turned to inquire for her darling boy, her only child, but he was missing. It is customary in the East in these caravans for the women to journey by themselves and the men by themselves. Perhaps Mary, looking around among the women and not seeing Jesus, supposed he was with his father among the men. Joseph, looking around among the men and missing Jesus, supposed that he was with Mary's kinsfolk. But, alas! as they reached Shiloh—memorable in its history as connected with Eli and Samuel—as the shades of night came upon that ancient village, they with the profoundest solicitude inquired for their son. What a moment of anxiety must it have been for Joseph and Mary, especially for the latter! Have you ever lost a child? If you have, you can rise to a conception of the keen so-

## CONVERSATIONS WITH CHRIST

licitude and the deep anxiety felt by those parental hearts. The next day they retraced their steps, and on the third day, entering the temple, there with other children sat the youth Jesus, a boy of twelve summers, listening to the Jewish rabbis expounding the law, and in turn asking questions. Certainly he was not there as a catechumen; he was not there merely as a learner, for it is evident that his mind was more thoroughly and richly stored with biblical knowledge than those rabbis whose phylacteries were broad and who boasted of their intimate acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures. Wondrous scene indeed! Were those rabbis ignorant that they needed instruction from a youth of such tender years? Were they sufficiently humble to receive wisdom from such a boy? Josephus records it himself. He says that when but fourteen years old the Jewish priests together with the rabbis were accustomed to come to his house to inquire of him touching the important questions as to the Jewish law and worship. If this be true, then we may suppose that those rabbis were not humble, but that they were weak-minded and ignorant. Among these Jewish rabbis stood this fair-haired boy. His answers to their

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questions arrested their attention, and the interrogations that he put to their understandings confounded them and elicited their admiration. There his parents found him. In a gentle voice and in a gentle manner Mary for the first time chided him. Did she ever again have occasion to chide him? I trow not. How gentle his reply to his mother! No frown was upon his brow, no excitement in his voice, but speaking with clearness and directness, he said: "I have been in my Father's house. Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? I have been here among these Jewish rabbis unfolding to them the law and the prophets. It is my Father's business, and I have been in his house." This is the first conversation of Jesus recorded in the Bible. In this one laconic sentence he bequeathed to the world the grandest truth ever uttered: the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

“With thee conversing, I forget all time.”  
Line 29, Book IV. —*Milton.*

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“The perfection of conversation is not to play a regular sonata, but, like the Æolian harp, to await the inspiration of the passing breeze.”  
—*Burke.*

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“With him sweet converse I maintain;  
Great as he is I dare be free;  
I tell him all my grief and pain,  
And he reveals his love to me.”  
—*Rev. John Newton.*

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“God doth talk with man.” —*Deuteronomy.*

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“I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.”  
—*Psalms.*



## CONVERSATIONS WITH CHRIST

### II

#### CHRIST'S CONVERSATION WITH THE PHARISEES TOUCHING HIS AGE

"Before Abraham was, I am."—John viii, 58.

THIS conversation took place in Jerusalem on the Temple Area, within Solomon's Porch, hard by the treasury, where in the early morning the Master sat and beheld the rich and the poor casting in their offerings to the Lord. The scene was worthy this memorable event. The glorious temple of God was the most magnificent ever dedicated to divinity. Covering a thousand feet from the Jews' Wailing Place to the Golden Gate, and fifteen hundred feet from the Tower of Antonia to the Ophel Wall, on the south, it was inclosed with white marble galleries three hundred feet high; and within this splendid inclosure were cloisters for the priests, courts for the women, for the men, and for the strangers; and in the center thereof stood the holy shrine wherein God conversed with mortal man.

The Master had spent the previous night on the Mount of Olives, and he "who had not



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where to lay his head" had rested somewhere within its friendly bowers. When the morning dawned he returned to the city and entered the holy temple. A sad scene was presented to his gaze. A mob of men brought to him a woman taken in a crime. He did not defend her in her sin, but turned upon her accusers with terrible rebukes; one by one the lecherous wretches withdrew from his presence, and the poor victim of their passions stood alone before him. With a divine compassion, all his own, he said to the erring girl, "Go, sin no more."

It was on this occasion that he wrote; it may have been the only time; and this time he wrote upon the pavement of the Temple Area. Would that that writing had been preserved for our eyes to read!

His enemies were now fully aroused. They had been disquieted, confused, dispersed; but they soon rallied in the person of the Pharisees, who at that time represented the most wealthy and influential portion of the Jewish commonwealth. They gathered around him in clamorous multitudes and demanded his authority for his mission, his utterances, and his works. They accused him of self-glorification; that he had placed himself upon a pedestal of renown and demanded that all men should pay

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him homage. His answer angered them to fury. He claimed to be the "only begotten Son of the Father;" that he possessed the sources of endless life; and that "If any man keep my saying, he shall never die." Quick as spark from smitten steel the Pharisees caught the expression and said: "Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead. Whom makest thou thyself? Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" Then Christ rose in the majesty of thought and declared his preexistence: "I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but God sent me." "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and was glad"—an immense truth! Abraham's body had been in the cave of Machpelah more than two thousand years, and for the Master to say that Abraham had seen his day, who had been on the earth less than thirty-three years, seemed preposterous. It was an immense claim; a vast stretch of faith demanded of his people. The climax was in sight. The Pharisees pressed him harder, and then Christ advanced to the ultimate truth, saying, "Before Abraham was, I am." This is the Hebrew equivalent of eternal self-existence, like the answer that God made to Moses, "I am that I am."

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If Christ did not come from beyond the grave, what is he to us more than any other good and wise man? Humanity needed a visitation from the unseen world; some one to flood the world with light touching the future life, that state of deathless love, whither our disembodied friends are, for whose society we yearn with that "hope that springs immortal in the human breast." Our Lord's preexistence is the most satisfying assurance of our immortality. Send us a messenger from out the unseen has been the cry of all the ages. Have we heard from beyond the grave? is the greatest of questions. Socrates was wont to say to his disciples, "Go search for a charmer who can charm away death," conscious of the insufficiency of his own teachings. Confucius said in his dying moments, "A sage shall come from the West." And to comfort his friends in the hour of death Zoroaster promised that Sosiosh—Messiah—would come to abolish death and bring immortality to light.

We draw presumptive arguments from mind and matter. Out of entology we make deductions to sustain our belief. Justice and mercy seem to demand an eternal period for the law of compensation, to vindicate the ways of God to man, and readjust the relations of man to

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man, and man to the Supreme. All have entertained this belief. We quote from the best and wisest of philosophers, and sing the "hymns of the ages," whose refrain is immortality. Yet doubt will not down. Some one must come from the spirit world.

Christ's preexistence is the corner stone of immortality. Limit his existence from the manger, and his assurance of our future state weighs no more than the speculations of the classic philosophers. But accepting as a fact his reply to the Pharisees, that he had lived in the eternal past, that his incarnation was the manifestation of God in the flesh, that he came to "bring life and immortality to light," he is then to us the truest and sweetest of teachers. Why do we cling to the story of Mount Tabor with deathless tenacity—the reappearance of Moses and Elijah? Why are we spellbound under the revelation of St. Paul's temporary translation into the "third heaven?" Why are the visions of Patmos so entrancing to our imaginations and affections? These are the confirmations of the Lord's reply to the Pharisees in this great conversation. How beautiful the words of John the Baptist, "He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me." He was six months younger

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than John. How sublime the declaration of St. John, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." How conclusive the saying of St. Paul, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday"—in all the past; "to-day"—in all the present; "and forever"—in all the future. These are the three grand divisions of time.

Three prophets were inspired to anticipate the coming of this illustrious One who would lift the veil of our future. Micah sings of him, "Whose goings forth have been from old, even from everlasting." Daniel calls him the "Ancient of days." Isaiah beholds the "Wonderful Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father." He claimed these descriptive prophecies, and when the Pharisees declared, "Thou art not yet fifty years old," he replied, "Before Abraham was, I am." And what else did he say of himself to those in conversation with him? "Ye are from beneath; I am from above. Ye are of this world; I am not of this world." "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." How

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magnificent! He could truly say: "I was in the bosom of the Father Almighty; alone with him before creation; I heard him speak, and it was done; command, and it stood fast. I was with him when he called matter into being, glowing with the white heat of his power, and when he imparted the impulse to the vast body of primordial matter which sent it on its first revolution; I saw him light the stars and kindle the exhaustless fires of the sun; I beheld the first day and the first night, the first year and the first procession of seasons, with the first flower that bloomed, and the first bird that sang; I heard the 'morning stars sing together and all the sons of God shout for joy.' I was there when he called the first archangel into existence and the first seraph to do his bidding. I was with him in Eden when he made Adam, and when Eve leaped full-grown from his side. And I was the contemporary of all the ages since man fell. I became his surety, and my Spirit has never left this earth, which I shall redeem. I tread the summits of the ages. I was in the ark with Noah, with Abraham on the plains of Mamre, with Moses in the wilderness, with Samuel in the temple, with David in his battles, with Solomon in his dreams, with Isaiah in his visions of glory, with Daniel on

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the banks of the Ulai; I was the 'form of the fourth' in the furnace with the three Hebrew children, and with Gabriel in the annunciation to Mary my mother."

The incarnation of Christ is one of his many epiphanies to mankind, and the grandest of them all. The Old Testament is his biography. He came to his friends in the dreams of the night, in the visions of the day, in a "burning bush," in the "still small voice," in the guise of a weary traveler, in the majestic form of an angel. His appearance as a man is only another guise. His epiphanies continue, and will probably appear until he appears in glory. One year after his ascension he appeared to St. Stephen, "standing at the right hand of God;" three years later to St. Paul on the way to Damascus; and thirty-two years thereafter to St. John on Patmos, where he renewed the sweet friendship of yore. His friends understood him to claim that he is the contemporary of the ages. St. John applies Isaiah's vision to Jesus. "Our fathers drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." "Neither let us tempt Christ as some of them tempted him, and were destroyed of serpents." Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.

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The appearance of Divinity to talk and walk with man is cardinal in the creeds of the ages. The avatars of Vishnu are claimed to be incarnations. The rationalists of China hold that their founder is an embodiment, and assert that eighty years passed between his conception and birth, and that when born his hair and beard were white, and hence his name, Laots—the “Old Boy.” The Shintoists of Japan believe that in the distant past one of the inferior gods came to earth, married a mortal woman, and of that marriage was the first Mikado. This belief runs through classic history. Alexander the Great claimed divine paternity, which caused the separation between the parents of the renowned Macedonian.

What is the genesis of this idea of the incarnation? Older than Rome, older than Egypt, older than Babylon, it is as old as Eden. It cheered the broken heart of Eve; it was the hope of Noah; it quickened the steps of Abram on his westward journey. Its first historic record is in the Pentateuch, which anticipates by five hundred years the sacred writings of any other religion known to mankind.

No greater injustice was ever perpetrated against history than the boast of modern infidelity that there are sacred writings extant



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which anticipate the utterance of this blessed truth, and that by many centuries; whereas all history is in proof that the oldest expression of alphabetic writing is the Decalogue, in the Pentateuch, which gives Moses a margin of hundreds of years over the Zend-Avesta of the Persians, the Five Kings of the Chinese, and the Tripitáka of the Buddhists. All the beautiful truths contained therein can be traced to this central source of religious truth, held by the people of God. Under the reign of Solomon his merchants sailed all seas and traversed all continents and carried with them copies of their holy books. Africa's queen came to the Holy City and returned with the promise of the Messiah. John carried the glad tidings into the Euphratean valley eight hundred years before our era; a hundred years later the Hebrew captives peopled that famous valley; a century thereafter Daniel was in Babylon, and then in Persia, and one hundred and fifty years subsequently Esther was queen of the Persian empire. In B. C. 320 Ptolemy Lagus transported one hundred thousand Hebrews into Egypt, and Seleucus Nicator built thirty cities in Asia, by Jewish captives, whose distinguishing faith was the incarnation of our Lord.

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This better view of Christ's presence on our earth is in harmony with our better revelations of the paternity of God. It is impossible for us to suppose for a moment that the heavenly Father would abandon his human children to struggle in doubt and darkness, uninformed of his will, character, and government during four thousand years; and then, as if he had aroused himself from this long sleep of cruel indifference, he sent his Son into the world. But how apparent is his tenderness and regardfulness of our souls when we behold his "only begotten Son" treading the summits of centuries as they pass in review before the Father Almighty.

Some overzealous defenders of Christianity contrast the age of the advent with the subsequent condition of the world, and ascribe this better estate of man to the coming of the Lord. Justice, kindness, and power impatiently ask why he delayed his advent. Such defenders forget that the grand characters in our sacred books lived centuries before the Messiah came, who were the offspring of his power, the products of his grace, and the embodiment of himself, who inspired their thoughts, animated their virtues, and made them the light of the world. Where in our own era shall we find nobler characters than Joseph and Moses

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among the rulers, Samuel and Daniel among the prophets, Hannah and Ruth among the mothers? The age of his advent was not worse than the world has been since. Art and learning had culminated in glory. Law had held universal empire. Comforts multiplied under Augustus. It was the time of the sweetest poets, most brilliant orators, most profound philosophers. True, it was a century of moral degeneracy, but not more so than the Dark Ages, a night of a thousand years from the extinction of the Western empire to the fall of Constantinople, when popes were monsters and emperors were butchers, when murders, robberies, and incest in high places filled the calendar of each day. France under Louis XI was as cruel and profligate, and Spain under Philip II was as base and bloody, and England under Richard III was as corrupt and polluted, as Rome under Cæsar Augustus.

One of the crimes of modern infidelity, a crime against reason and history, is the claim that Christ is an evolution, a product of antecedent conditions. An evolution mania has smitten the intellect of our age, and it is assumed that there is an evolution of worlds, minerals, plants, animals, of art, science, government, and religion. This craze will have

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its day ; some new fad will take its place, when all that is true and grand in the science of evolution will receive the approval of reason and piety. If evolution means anything when applied to personality and character, it means a precedence and the persistent survival of the fittest. But in the history of the world there are immense gaps—periods of light and periods of darkness. Evolution demands an unbroken series from the inferior to the superior, whereas the history of our race is made up of progressions to a point of exhaustion. The illustrious characters who have illuminated our history have appeared without an antecedent and departed without a subsequent. What had preceded Homer to produce a Homer, or Solomon to produce a Solomon, or a Luther to produce a Luther? Such men are heaven-born ; coruscations from the throne of the Eternal, to light up the human intellect and quicken the universal conscience, and standing on the summits of the receding centuries, they shouted, “The morning cometh.”

What was there in the antecedent condition of the world in general or in the Jewish commonwealth in particular for six hundred years prior to the advent to produce the Christ, so pure, so wise, so exalted? If we go backward

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along his ancestral lines for thousands of years, we shall fail to discover his prototype in the lines thereof; we will find in the three times fourteen generations murderers, adulterers, liars, rebels, idolaters; yet the splendor of his moral character challenged the admiration of the world, and the judicial verdict was, "I find no fault in this man." He astonished the scholars of Jerusalem by the wealth of his knowledge; they engaged him in conversation and demanded the source of his learning, and reluctantly confessed, "Never man spake like this man." Familiar with all the intricacies of the traditions of the elders and with the civil and religious jurisprudence of his countrymen, he met them at every point in controversy and covered them with confusion by the cogency of his replies. He drew illustration and argument from nature, and ever with scientific accuracy. He touched nature on every side, and nature responded. His works were the credentials that he is the "Ancient of days," who had heard the music of the spheres when the morning stars sang together.

No other Christ can satisfy my soul. He must be preexistent; he must inhabit the praises of eternity; he must come traveling down the everlasting ages of the Godhead and tell me of

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a world beyond this "vale of tears." All other arguments for my soul's immortality are absolutely worthless without this. This alone is all-sufficient. Assured of this blessed certitude, I care not whether Moses and Elias came to Mount Tabor, or whether Paul was caught up into the third heaven and heard things not lawful for men to speak, or whether modern spiritualism is fact or fancy, but with this certitude then I am prepared to believe and accept all other manifestations.

The religious evolutionists of our day assume that Christianity is the outgrowth of Judaism, and that Judaism is the outgrowth of a primitive nature-worship. How plausible this assumption! But studies in comparative religion and discoveries in biblical archæology are in proof that pure monotheism preceded Moses and is the form of faith in all the earlier religions of mankind. Nature-worship is a degeneracy from the worship of nature's God, when men substituted the heavenly bodies, once held as symbols, for God himself. Judaism is not a growth, but an organization, to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah, and Christianity is the realization of all the types and prophecies of the preliminary system. Christianity and Judaism are parts of one great

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whole. Because a man builds a mansion and is the first to occupy it is not proof that the mansion produced the man; nor does first occupancy prove that he did not build it. The Bible from Genesis to Revelation is the biography of Christ.

There is something captivating in this theory of development; it seems to explain so many difficulties, and is so gratifying to the pride of our understanding. The arguments advanced in its support have such a show of reason. The crimes of the Church, the oppressive laws of Christian nations, and the sectarian persecutions which have prevailed in each century are quoted as primary evidence that Christianity is at best an imperfect development, and that society will advance to a better future of ethical culture when these evils will cease. The allegations are true, but the conclusions are false. The Church is human; Christianity is divine. Light is one thing, and the telescope is another thing; the former is perfect, the latter may be imperfect. The Church is the medium through which Christ is manifested to the world; the medium is often so imperfect that we have but a distorted view of its divine Founder. The Christian religion is no more responsible for the oppressive laws and the persecutions waged

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by so-called Christian nations than is literature responsible for its prostitution to the vilest purposes by some literary men. Shall we reject the masters of the English classics because certain writers for fame or funds degrade the high art of composition?

Nor is there logical force in the assumption that Christianity is a human growth because some men outside the Church have been the advocates of great and generous ideas. Were the religion of our Lord confined to sects or creeds or Church organizations, there would be point and pith in the proposition; but it permeates society far beyond the confined limits of its professed disciples. It has friends within and friends without, as it has foes within and foes without. It is not too much to affirm that every sentiment of justice, every principle of law, every Godlike charity, by whomsoever and wheresoever advocated, may be found in the Bible, and can be traced to it as to a primal source.

And what was the final issue of this heated and prolonged conversation between Christ and the Pharisees on the preexistence of our Lord? How intense the excitement! How vehement the replies! What elevation of thought, dignity of language, and consciousness of truth on



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the part of the "Ancient of days" in contrast with the limited views, the astute repartee, the rabbinical subterfuge of the Pharisees! Follow this celebrated conversation to the end as each in turn asserts or denies:

*Christ*: "I am the light of the world."

*Pharisees*: "Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true."

*Christ*: "The Father that sent me beareth witness of me."

*Pharisees*: "Where is thy Father?"

*Christ*: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. I go my way, and whither I go, ye cannot come."

*Pharisees*: "Will he kill himself?"

*Christ*: "Ye are from beneath; I am from above."

*Pharisees*: "Who art thou?"

*Christ*: "Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him."

Great excitement followed these lofty, holy declarations. There was commotion in the throng of listeners who had heard the conversation. Yielding to the truth of his replies, "many believed on him," to whom he turned and addressed them thus: "If ye continue in

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my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

*Pharisees:* "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?"

*Christ:* "I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you."

*Pharisees:* "Abraham is our father."

*Christ:* "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham."

*Pharisees:* "We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God."

*Christ:* "If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not."

*Pharisees:* "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?"

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*Christ:* "I have not a devil; but I honor my Father, and ye do dishonor me. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death."

*Pharisees:* "Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?"

*Christ:* "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad."

*Pharisees:* "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?"

*Christ:* "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."

The conversation ends in tumult. The Pharisees, enraged by their defeat in argument, resort to violence. They rend the air with curses; they rush upon him; they tear up the stones of the streets to stone him to death. See that Jewish mob, those Pharisees with their phylacteries, often seen on the corner of the street making long prayers to be seen of men; see them pick up the stones and hurl at his sacred head.

But he was not there; he had vanished; he had dematerialized in their very presence.

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He had this wondrous power of invisibility. This was the only kind of miracle Jesus performed to defend himself. Once in Nazareth and three times in the Holy City, St. Luke says of the Nazareth mob, "He passing through the midst of them went his way." St. John says of the Jerusalem riot, "He went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." He did not fly in fear, but his familiar saying was, "My hour is not yet come." He always had this marvelous power. He could appear and disappear at will. He belonged to two worlds. From the bosom of the everlasting Father he came and dwelt on earth thirty-three years; and at death passed into the heavens for three days; returned and lived with his earthly friends forty days, and then ascended to his invisible throne, whence he will come again with all his holy angels.



“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.”

—James.

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“Let your conversation be without covetousness.”

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“Ye have heard of my conversation in time past.”

—Paul.

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“Among whom also we all had our *conversation* in times past.”

—Paul to the Ephesians.

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“And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy *conversation* of the wicked.”

—Peter.



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### III

#### CHRIST'S CONVERSATION WITH SATAN

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan."—Luke iv, 8.

THEY had known each other in the spirit world. In those happier days one was on the throne of his Father, adored by angelic hosts; the other was chief among the angels, a prince to the King immortal. In his primal estate the tempter was a glorious being, one of the "firstborn sons of light," who shouted for joy when the "morning stars sang together." Of splendid intellect, he outranked all his fellows in the brilliancy of his endowments. He was more majestic than Gabriel, more powerful than Michael, and blazed in beatific vision before the throne of the Supreme. When he "kept not his first estate, but left his own habitation" and descended to earth, he appeared as "lightning falling from heaven." How magnificent! The test of his loyalty to the throne of the universe was to remain in the heavenly sphere assigned him. But a knowledge of a new creation on our earth, of beings in the



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"image of God," had excited his ambition, and he descended to our Eden. What a descent! In the twinkling of an eye he was changed from an angel to a devil! He never left our planet, and is now as ever the "prince of this world."

The splendor of his mind is seen in the consummate ingenuity of his plans. He solicits to sin with the promise of some reward. The wisdom of the serpent is the symbol of his genius, and the strength of the lion is the measure of his power. He is monarch of all he surveys. This world is his dominion, and he claims the right to offer it to another. The elements obey his command. He is the "prince of the power of the air." "The fire of God fell from heaven" at his invocation and consumed the flocks of Job; at his call the "winds came from the wilderness," and smote the good man's house to the death of his sons; disease, poverty, and death are in his awful retinue. His disguises are many; now a serpent and anon an "angel of light;" he comes as a friend to relieve hunger, as an inquirer for the Messiah, as a proprietor to offer a world for an alliance.

The Master never failed to recognize the tempter's personality as prince of devils. He

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knew that he was not conversing with an imaginary foe, and the ordeal through which he was soon to pass was neither an allegory nor a vision, nor a mental struggle, nor the offspring of human passions and circumstances, but a conflict with the chief of evil spirits of immense power and intense individuality. He did not seek this conversation, for he would not be the author of his own temptation; nor did he dread the onset, for devils were subject unto him. They knew him, called him by name, prayed to him, and obeyed him whenever he commanded them to "come out of the possessed." As angel spirits attended him, so devil spirits dreaded him. He often told his friends that as there are good men and bad men, so there are good angels and bad angels. He upheld the charmed story of angelic visitations to patriarchs, to the shepherds of Bethlehem, and the splendid mission of Gabriel to Daniel in Babylon and to Mary in Nazareth; and also the visit of Satan to Job, of his quarrel with the archangel Michael "about the body of Moses," and of his "desire to have Peter to sift him as wheat." He taught that angelology and demonology are parts of a great whole, the two great testaments of the moral universe; that as good angels are "ministering

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spirits," so bad angels come to men in human form, control their thoughts, and influence their destiny. He ever acted and spoke as one living in the foci of three worlds—of angels, of devils, of men. He could pray to his Father for seventy-two thousand angel-warriors. He could say to the prince of devils, "Get thee hence," and when he approached lesser demons they cried out, "Hast thou come hither to torment us before our time?" He ever lived where these three worlds impinge, and held in his right hand the "keys of Hades." He boldly ascribed all the evil in the world, whether of sin against God or crime against man, to Satanic power, and thereby lifted the crushing responsibility from human nature, which is subject to temptation.

The scene of this conversation is the western side of the valley of the Jordan, amid the solitudes of Quarantania—the Mountain of the Forty—the days of the temptation. Neither Apelles with his brush nor Burke with his pen could sketch the dreary aspect of this forbidden spot. The hills are broken into a thousand rugged peaks, and their color is a mixture of a dull yellow, red, and white; the depressions are dry and stony, and on that blighted soil there is neither shrub nor flower nor blade

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of grass. It is desolation with nothing to relieve; no bird banquets the ear with its music, no flower charms the eye with its hues or delights the smell with its perfume, and no fountain sparkles in the sunlight or bubbles to slake the traveler's thirst. The rocks seem scorched with the fires of hell. Over it the vulture flies, and on its accursed cliffs prowl the jackal by day and the hyena by night. It is now as in the past the den of thieves; and the tourist of to-day, on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho, can see the robber Bedouin peering from behind some peak with rifle leveled at the passing wayfarer; for he who goes down to Jericho now as of yore "falls among thieves." Hard by the roadside are broken walls, fragments of an arch, and deep vaults which mark the site of the inn to which the Good Samaritan carried the robbed and wounded traveler shunned by the priest and Levite. This was the chosen abode on earth for the devil and his angels, counterpart of Pandemonium. Hither the Spirit led the Son of God to converse with the Prince of Darkness.

After great triumphs come great trials. The Master had just been proclaimed the Messiah of God by the greatest of the prophets. It was

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a grand scene. From the base of Quarantania to the banks of the Jordan extends the vast and fertile plain of Jericho. Beyond the river rise the trans-Jordanic range, massive and solemn, from whose summits Moses passed to his reward. Between plain and mountain flows the Jordan, from the fountains of Baniôs to the basin of the Dead Sea. After all the people had been baptized the Master presents himself to be inducted into his high-priesthood. The honor was too great for the Baptist, and he declines, but yielding to the rightful claims upon his ministry, he officiates at the inauguration of the Messiah. Impressive and grand, it far excelled all the coronations of earth. The heavens open; a dove from the groves of paradise hovers above him; a voice from out the excellent glory proclaims, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." What rapture fills his soul when once more he hears his Father's voice, attesting his mission of truth and duty, whose beneficent influence would go forth as the beams of the morning.

The time of this conversation is uncertain. One of his biographers intimates that the temptation followed immediately the baptism; another gives us an itinerary covering many

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days, during which Andrew and Peter, Philip and Nathanael, and St. John were called. "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and Jesus was called, and his disciples." These writers pay little attention to chronology and the continuity of events; they record facts and leave to us the historical connection. The language of the tempter suggests that the Master had put forth claims to the Messiahship and the people had received him. It may have been a year after the baptism when Jesus was in the height of his fame. "His fame went throughout all Syria, and there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan." He had mingled in the festivities of the people; had attended their weddings, and often accepted invitations to dine with the publicans. He was present at a "great feast" in the house of his friend Matthew, who had invited a "great company of publicans and others." These festive scenes and applauding multitudes gave currency to the rumor that, unlike the Baptist, who fasted oft and was abstemious, the Messiah was called "gluttonous, and a winebibber." He must now withdraw from these exciting influences and give

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fresh proof of his divine mission. There is an awful power in St. Mark's saying, "The Spirit driveth him into the wilderness," and "He was with the wild beasts." There is a sublime solemnity in another expression, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." It is not an impulse nor a rage of passion that sweeps him on with whirlwind energy. There is deliberation; the place is chosen; the object is announced, "To be tempted of the devil." As the Spirit of the Lord had transported Philip from the valley of Roses, where he had baptized the eunuch, to Azotus, on the shores of the Mediterranean thirty miles away, so now the same Spirit withdraws the Master from scenes of excitement to the solitudes of Quarantania. It was common for him to withdraw from the society of his friends and spend the night alone in prayer; and at times he requested them to leave him and permit him to journey alone. Sometimes his whereabouts was unknown, and the people would inquire, "Where is he? What think ye; will he not come to the feast?" But it is unlikely that he would withdraw in the midst of his great career and his whereabouts remain unknown for forty days and forty nights, a perplexity to his friends

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and a wonder to the people. There is a manifest propriety in the continuity of events in his life—his birth, preparation, baptism, temptation, public ministry, trial, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. And while St. John intimates an intervening period, yet there is a naturalness in the long-occupied notion that from the fullness of the joy and glory of the inauguration by the Baptist, the dove, and the Father's voice, he should pass into the wilderness and contend with that same fallen angel who had triumphed over Adam in Eden.

As this fallen angel has the power of transformation, and sometimes appears as an "angel of light" to deceive the very elect, it is probable he comes to the Messiah in the barren wilderness as a friend, perhaps an inquirer in the form of the high priest of Jerusalem. How courteous his inquiry, "If thou be the Son of God." The voice from heaven proclaimed that Sonship, and it is not now questioned nor denied, only proof is requested. The fast had gone on through forty days and forty nights, and now nature claims recuperation. "He was afterward an hungered." The divine power which had sustained him in the fast is withdrawn, and, like any man, he felt the pangs of hunger followed by physical exhaustion, nerv-



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ous prostration, and mental lassitude, incident to the fast and mental struggle with this accomplished tempter. Around him on all the hills in that wilderness are siliceous accretions, in shape and color like the little loaves of Eastern bread as if petrified. "Command that these stones be made bread." Taking one in his hand, he presents it to the hungry Messiah, and perhaps reminded him of the manna that fell in another wilderness, and of the ravens that fed Elijah in the neighboring vale by the brook Cherith, and of the angels who spread a table for the same prophet on the burning sands of Arabia. Where are the ravens and where the angels now? Must the Son of God perish with hunger? What an appeal to his knowledge and power as the chemist of all nature! "Convince me and relieve yourself by this display of your lofty claim." The tempter had come in the crucial moment. The mental tension of forty days with devils had rendered him oblivious to hunger, for there is an oblivious power in excitement which renders the soldier in battle unconscious of his wounds. But the reaction came at last; all the assaults on the mind had been resisted, and now the attack on the senses is made. "Eat and live" is the tempting suggestion.

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How intently the Master must have gazed upon his solicitor to evil! He did not deny his hunger, nor did he deny his power to transmute the stones into bread, nor did he deny his Father's care for him. He declared that the soul is of more value than the body; that the satisfaction of our physical appetites is less pleasurable than the satisfying joy of the spirit; that we have a higher nature whose supreme delight is doing the will of the Lord. He does not refer to his divine nature, but attests his humanity, and relates to all men. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." He did not say that God shall not live, for he was tempted and triumphed as a *man*; and as a man he asserts his preference for the word of God, the command and promise of his Father.

How wonderful the answer! Yet the reply is the occasion for the second temptation. He had proclaimed his trust in God; that trust is now assailed. He does not argue the point; concedes it. "Thou hast refused to gratify your palate, and that on holy ground. How dost thou know that thou art the Son of God? How do the people know it? Stories of your wonderful birth may be fables; the dove and the voice at your baptism may have been illu-

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sions. Come to the pinnacle of the temple, 300 feet high, and I will gather all the people thither to see you. Cast yourself down; God will give his angels charge over you. You are unknown; you will be popular as the Messiah of God. How subtle the suggestion! What a challenge to his pride, ambition, and vanity! Can anything search the heart more keenly? What is more tempting to the wise than to question their wisdom? What an insult it was to his noble soul, "If thou be!" What a world of mystery there is in that monosyllable "if!" "I do not say that thou art not the Son of God, but if thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

On the eastern side of Jerusalem Herod the Great reared a magnificent marble gallery; it rose in splendor 300 feet high. The great Temple Area on which stood the temple was 1,000 feet from east to west and 1,500 feet from north to south. Around this splendid area was this great gallery of glory, a series of galleries, and on the highest, 300 feet high, was the promenade, and there the people of the Holy City were wont to linger and look down

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into the deep valley of the Kidron, and out on the Mount of Olives, the valley of the Jordan, and Mount Pisgah beyond. Here stood the Messiah when tempted to suicide. What a spectacle! "I will appoint the day; all Jerusalem will assemble in the valley below, and on the declivities of Moriah, and on the acclivities of Olivet; and as thou leapest the angels will appear and bear thee up. Then all the people will hail thee as the immortal Shiloh." What a sequence in these temptations—first to appetite, then to presumption, now to death! This was an assault upon the whole system of means to ends, upon the correlative duties, that we are to act when duty calls, and that in the interest of humanity; that we are not to attempt to walk the sea unless duty calls; that we are not to expose ourselves contrary to nature's laws unless necessity requires; that we are ever to live in harmony with nature, and never expect divine aid outside of law. Law is God.

And what was the answer? "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." To save a ruined world the Messiah could step from mountain top to mountain top around the world, or tread the oceans as marble paths, but he must not tempt the Highest. Presumption is a crime against nature.

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A second journey is now proposed. The assault on the appetite has failed, and that on pride has failed, but success may attend an appeal to the "last infirmity of noble minds." What an astute logician is the tempter! The third solicitation comes from the second, as the second came from the first. Does he transform himself into the person of the Roman proconsul, Pontius Pilatus, governor of Judea, whose ambitious dreams had tempted him to imperial dominion? It was a plot rather than a possession. It was a proposed alliance for the conquest of the world. It was a suggestion along the line of the Messiah's mission. "Thou art poor, here is wealth; thou art a prince without a dime; a king without a kingdom; a Messiah without a disciple. Thou hast come to establish the kingdom of the brotherhood of man, the highest form of humanity, the noblest civilization with its retinue of purity and hope, of peace and happiness, of power and glory. Let us form a holy alliance. Let us cross the Jordan and stand where Moses stood, on the mountains of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah. Tiberius Claudius Nero is old and infamous, dreaded by the Senate and hated by the people; he is now in retirement on the island of Capri, and has abandoned his empire to the detestable

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Sejanus. Behold his empire of one hundred and twenty millions of people, washed on the east by the Tigris and the Euphrates, on the west by the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, and stretching far into Africa to the Mountains of the Moon. Behold this vision of the Roman world, and beyond are Persia and India, China and Japan. O, thou Nazarene, pretended Messiah, join me in this alliance; seize the scepter of Rome, place Cæsar's crown upon thy brow, and thou shalt have the kingdom of this world and the glory thereof. It is possible. Once I gave the whole world to Alexander of Macedon, who seized Greece, took all Asia Minor, subdued the land of the Sphinx and pyramids, occupied Jerusalem, conquered all Syria, all the valley of the Euphrates, and the whole of Persia to the banks of the Indus, and proclaimed, 'I am master of the world.' There is but one condition—acknowledge my supremacy; 'All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.' ”

How seemingly proper and beneficent the offer! The world to be the Messiah's without an army of missionaries or a procession of martyrs. But the condition was appalling; it was the sanction of Satan's rebellion in heaven; it was the worst form of idolatry—devil-wor-

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ship. All the indignation of the Messiah's righteous soul was kindled, and it burned like a mountain on fire. The tempter stands naked before him. It is the devil; the mask has fallen; the transformation vanishes; he who beguiled Adam is revealed. The Messiah commands, "Get thee hence, Satan; begone, thou condemned spirit, begone." Once more he quotes from the law, "For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

The conversation ends. But the Messiah never forgot that terrible interview. He recalled it often. He would say to the tempted people: "I was tempted by the prince of this world to enter into an alliance with him; he appealed to my ambition to worship him, and all kingdoms should be mine. Had I yielded, a world would have been lost. What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

What followed? "Behold, angels came and ministered unto him." They had been watching the conflict, but dare not interfere, and will not appear till devils depart. "They ministered unto him." They spread a table for him in the wilderness, as in the days of Elijah. They embraced him and shouted, "Thou hast

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won, won for humanity!" How serene his spirit! How profound the repose of his great soul when conscious that he had done what Adam failed to do, but might have done!

How striking the comparisons and the contrasts between these two great historic characters of the world! Both were Federalists—each the head of a race, the old and the new; one was a living soul, the other a conquering spirit; the first was the "figure of him that was to come." Both were tempted to sin by the same tempter. Both were to fast as a test of probation; one from a particular food, the other for a particular season. In each case the point of attack was the appetite; in the one a new relish, a fresh sensation; in the other to satisfy hunger before the appointed time. Both were tempted to ambition; one to be "wise"—what is more comely than wisdom? the other to be rich, to "gain the whole world." Both were faultless—a perfect body, an unclouded intellect, a spotless moral nature. Behold the contrasts! A garden of delights, whose virgin soil was carpeted with living green, adorned with flowers of every hue and sweetest odor, studded with trees whose multiplied fruits delighted the eye and gratified the taste, in whose boughs lived and sang in ravishing notes birds



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of exquisite plumage, under skies forever friendly, where zephyrs breathed perennial summer, and rivers flowed in majesty, and fountains sent forth pearly spray flecked with rainbow beauty; and wherein every want was supplied, every desire gratified, every wish delighted; wherein health was perpetual, youth immortal, the mind clear as a cloudless sky, the conscience at peace, the heart sweet with love, and marriage a sacrament. How different from a lonely wilderness, wherein neither shrub grows nor flower blooms, nor birds sing, nor fountains flow; where the rocks are scorched with eternal fires; the desolation is supreme under burning skies in summer, and in winter the maddened winds howl like ten thousand furies—fit place for the devil and his angels to tempt the Saviour of mankind.

How short the struggle in Eden, perhaps not a day, but one assault at that; but in Quarantania assault after assault through forty days, the weakest point first assailed—the pang of hunger, that fevers the brain, unnerves the system, and disqualifies for persistent effort. Around one was an atmosphere of absolute purity. No corrupt public opinion constrained his action, and no long and fearful history of the world of manifold crimes and miseries to

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weaken his faith. But to the other the world was a lazaretto of moral pollution, and for thirty years he had been subjected to the society of impure beings, and behind him were forty centuries of wars, idolatry, and inhumanity, depressing to his spirit and disheartening to his merciful mission. To one was committed the easier task to perpetuate the purity of his race by his ever obedience; the mission of the other was to recover a lost race. One has to hold the fort, the other has to take. It was the folly of the first Adam to hold a parley with the tempter, and argue the command of God to justify his disobedience; but the answer of the second Adam was a quick, positive refusal, backed by a scriptural quotation to strengthen his resistance. Then came the culmination. One yields and is driven from paradise; the other resists and is "received up into glory." Christ reverses what Adam did and did what Adam failed to do. Then came the angels, came to both, but how different the object of their coming! They came to Eden and found an empty paradise, for "God drove out the man, and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." But how joyous was their

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mission to the wilderness! "Behold, angels came and ministered unto him," and the "wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

The conversation ends, but not its lessons. They are immortal. And what are they? There is no sin in temptation; it is a compliment to virtuous manhood; it supposes that there is resident virtue of which the tempted may be bereft. The totally depraved are never tempted; they can descend no lower. The refinement of temptation tallies with the refinement of character. He who was without sin, in whom was no guile, was "tempted in all points like as we are." There is no virtue without probation. Angels and men are tested. All the celestial ones have proved their right to happiness and glory by resistance. Liberty is power to stand and power to fall, an awful power, but becoming one made a little lower than God. No one can be proud of virtue not his own. The throne of the Creator is not surrounded by automatons to chant doxologies. Free himself, the Christ respects those who are free to do his will. Because he could have yielded, there is force in his temptation, power in his example, honor in his resistance.

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Man can do what Christ did. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee in the hour of temptation, by using the Master's saying, 'Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.' " And all can say with the Messiah, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me. I have overcome the world."



“ Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles :  
that, whereas they speak against us as evil doers, they may  
by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God.”

—*Peter.*

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“ We may not be able to perform all the high religious  
duties demanded by the law of the Lord, but we can  
place our feet in Christ’s footprints and illustrate by a  
well-ordered life and godly conversation that we have  
been with Jesus and learned of him.” —*J. P. N.*



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### IV

#### CHRIST'S CONVERSATION WITH HIS FRIENDS

"He asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?"—Matt. xvi, 13.

It was the third year of his public career. It was the period of rejection. It was the time when his unpopularity was apparent to all. He was now an outlaw. A price had been placed upon his head. He was a fugitive from the commonwealth of Israel. He had found an asylum in the dominion of a pagan prince. The scene was on the upper Jordan, twenty miles north from the Sea of Galilee. The old town was called Cæsarea Philippi in honor of Cæsar Augustus, the emperor, and Philip the tetrarch, of the house of Herod. The famous old city stood at the base of the primordial Hermon, with winter on its brow, spring in its lap, and summer at its feet. From ten of the perennial and largest fountains in the world the waters of the Jordan gush forth flowing southward to the little Lake Huleh, on whose shores Abraham had contended in battle, and nine miles farther they form the beautiful Lake Ti-



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berias. Among such scenes of mingled beauty and grandeur, of river and lake, of gorge and mountain, the Saviour sojourned in exile. Never an extensive traveler, never going south beyond Bethlehem, nor westward farther than Tyre and Sidon, nor to the eastward of the Jordan except to Bethabara, where John had baptized, nor to the north but to Cæsarea Philippi—a limited but constant traveler, “who went about doing good.” There had been many vicissitudes in his wonderful life. There were fluctuations in the public mind. Now the people would crown him King of Israel, and anon they would banish him to heathen lands. In strange alternations his ears were banqueted with hosannas and then terrified with the awful cry, “Crucify him, crucify him.” He was now alone with the twelve. Once before he had turned to them and said, “Will ye also go away?” They had followed him through good report and evil report. He had instructed them as had no other religious teacher, and displayed before them a power over nature that had eclipsed the wonders of the past. They had experienced a beautiful soul-rest while in his society, but there was a mental rest for which they sighed. It was no longer an open question with them whether the soul can repose

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undisturbedly in Christ when the intellect is confused with conflicting opinions, filled with anxious doubts, and the judgment hesitating to accept the evidence furnished. While Christianity is the noble religion of the sensibilities, soliciting our affections, animating our hopes, stimulating our faith, inflaming our zeal, and cheering us with prospects enchanting and lovely, yet it does this by an intellectual elevation imparted from on high, with thoughts suggested by angels and spirits, or words spoken by accredited messengers. The time had come for Christ to give to the twelve this mental rest.

He initiated this conversation by a question intensely personal, the correct answer to which would startle the world. He had prepared their minds to receive the assertion of a great truth by warning them against the errors of the day, and had prepared himself for the occasion by spending the previous night in prayer. In that historic group were his three confidential friends, Peter, James, and John; Philip, the lovable; Nathanael, the scholar; and Thomas, the skeptic; Simon Zelotes, Andrew of Bethsaida, and James, afterward Bishop of Jerusalem; Thaddeus, or Lebbeus, Judas or Kerioth, and Matthew, collector of customs; with these standing around him in a semicircle he begins

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the conversation. As if an angel had whispered, each felt the greatness of the hour, big with the destiny of a world. The question he propounded seemed casual and superficial. They were men of the people; they knew the public mind; they had thought much and heard all. They were now to witness for the people and report to him the impressions made by his words, his miracles, and his character. It was not prompted by pride, for he had none to gratify; nor curiosity, for he was without vanity; nor ambition, for he had no worldly plans to execute; nor revenge, for he was the "friend of all, the enemy of none." Inspired by the noblest impulse, he would correct false impressions and impart truth, and thereby enlarge the sphere of goodness. The purpose of the question was to make the twelve the custodians of a claim which would lead to dungeons and to thrones, to his execution on Calvary, and to their martyrdom in many lands, and ultimately to his coronation on the throne of the universe and to their exaltation to the right hand of his majesty on high. "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" They recited the rumors of the day, the variety of impressions made. All the people conceded the mystery of his being, and all were

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perplexed where to place him—among good men or bad men or deceived men, and whether to call him creation or creator, devil or angel. The rumors reported were highly honorable. It was an honor to be called John the Baptist, prophet of the prophets, hero of heroes, martyr of martyrs; or Elijah, who had anointed kings and went to heaven in a chariot of fire; or Jeremiah, whose “eyes were a fountain of tears;” or one of the unnamed immortal prophets, perhaps Samuel or Isaiah or Daniel. This must have gratified his great soul, but it did not satisfy. How passing strange that after three years of his wonderful ministry, declaring truths older than time, vast as eternity, changeless as God; living a sinless life, without reproach and irreproachable; performing wonders on mind and matter, on land and sea, and blessing all who had accepted him gladly, yet in all that medley of opinions no one called him the Messiah of God.

A soul less great would have abandoned his mission and given up a world, ungrateful and unbelieving, to “believe a lie that it might be damned.”

The conversation goes on. All that had been said in question and answer was preliminary to a final question and a final reply. That

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twelve must answer for themselves, profess their faith, and reveal their convictions. Had they answered for themselves as they had for the people, the "world's whole destinies might have been changed, the Saviour would have failed in his mission, Christianity never have been, and Christendom unknown to history." It was a supreme moment. Was there not silence in heaven? Angels and redeemed spirits awaited their response with untold anxiety, not unlike that which had been experienced for the return of Moses and Elias from the summit of Tabor. Never was the verdict of twelve men awaited with such deep concern. The mission of Jesus lay with the disciples. Had they been his disciples in vain? Had the diversified rumors which they had recited to him unsettled their belief? They had reached a period in human life of the highest moral grandeur. Immortal glory or eternal shame depended on their confession. Were they to sink back into the obscurity from which they had been elevated, and into oblivion, from which there would be no recall, or rise to imperishable renown, in the "glorious company of the apostles" and the "noble army of the martyrs?"

Turning to these twelve jurors upon whose

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verdict the fate of a new epoch was suspended and the welfare of our whole race depended, he put the heart-searching, the momentous, the all-embracing interrogation, "But whom say ye that I am?" Each word had a vital emphasis and a sublime significance. The first word separates them from the whole population of Palestine, from the Hebrew commonwealth, from the Jewish Sanhedrin, with all its learned rabbis and anointed priests. There is an awful grandeur in this isolation, from which the bravest of the brave might shrink, but from which there is no release. "Ye" have seen me in the glory of my power over all nature, when winds and waves obeyed me, when disease fled from my presence, when the dead returned to life at my command. "Ye" have heard my words of wisdom, as "never man spake." "Ye" have seen the sinlessness of my life, the beauty of my spirit, the charity of my works. "Whom say ye that I am?" And the sublimity of the interrogation was in the questioner, who claimed to be Prophet, Priest, and King, greater than Moses, greater than Aaron, greater than Solomon.

We confess our sympathy with the twelve. They were to decide against a nation, their own nation, and in favor of one man, the "man

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Christ Jesus." They were to be a unit in their belief on a stupendous fact, on which there was to be no difference of opinion. Yet in all the ages men have differed in their opinions touching this many-sided fact. After three years of a wonderful ministry of words and deeds the Master had failed to produce this unity of faith. Did he attempt an impossibility? The origin of human opinion is difficult of solution. We are made to differ. Such is the constitution of the human mind, such the process by which men reach conclusions, such the variant factors in the equation, that the best and wisest of men differ on the most beneficent of subjects. Great men differ as to the best form of government, whether monarchical or republican; whether education should be coercive or should be left to parental dictation; whether public morality should be constrained by civil law or spring from private virtue. If men differ on questions purely secular, involving the happiness of a whole community and relating to all mankind, it is not surprising that they hold variant views on the duties, obligations, and privileges of religion. The wisest of men are not agreed as to God, the primal cause of all things, as to the grounds of religious belief, whether eternal fitness or the greatest good, or

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the divine will, and whether Christianity is the product of a civilization of four thousand years and destined to be superseded by a higher civilized life.

The sources of our opinions are a beautiful speculation, and as important as interesting. One man is the echo of another, and can give no other reason for the faith that is in him than the same is held by another. Others are so constituted that from sheer pride of understanding and love of distinction they agree with no one else; they lift themselves on a pedestal of isolation to be the "observed of all observers;" they prefer opposition right or wrong, for Christ or against him. And there is a psychological source of belief. A man is a Universalist because of his nature; such is the quantity of the "milk of human kindness" flowing through his veins he sees but one side of Jehovah—his mercy. Another is made of sterner stuff, and is a Calvinist, whose reverence for God's sovereignty is gloomy and unmerciful, and he would believe in hell if there is no hell. Universalism and Calvinism are idiosyncratic. A man's temperament colors his devotions, whether simple as a Quaker's or imposing as a papist's. Birth and education are powerful factors in the origin of our reli-



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gious views. Had John Wesley been born in Arabia and in youthhood been the companion of Mohammed, he would have followed the crescent rather than the cross. In natural endowments the founder of Methodism and the founder of Islamism were not unlike; the former excelled the latter in scholarship, but there is little difference in the splendor of their intellects. Each was the leader of men; both had the genius of organization, and through untold centuries their influence on the world will remain. There are so many similar incidents in their childhood, in the society into which they were thrown, and in happenings on their journeys into distant lands; and they were reformers by aspiration and philanthropists by inclination. Many a good man has publicly thanked God that he was born in a Christian land. Had John Knox and Ignatius Loyola exchanged the conditions of their childhood, Loyola would have been the vehement iconoclast of popery and Knox the father of the Jesuits. Had John Stuart Mill been the son of Howard, the Christian philanthropist, he would have been the defender of Christ, and not his prosecutor. Some have risen above the environments of parentage and the direction of education, and have issued into a Christian life

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from infidel homes, and others have emerged into the light of the glorious Gospel out of the darkness of paganism. These are exceptions. The law of the kingdom is conversion in childhood. Christianity draws her mighty hosts from Christian schools; the Sabbath school is the nursery of the church. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord" is the secret of the tenacious existence of the Hebrew people, and the fountain of the life of the Christian Church is that saying of the Master, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God."

Such facts demand of us a larger sympathy with those who differ from us in their belief. The Messiahship of Christ is the largest subject ever addressed to the human intellect. It is transcendent. It may be apprehended as a revelation, but never comprehended as a fact. It may be received as rational, but can never be discovered. It is a communication from the spirit world. This was St. Peter's blessing, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

This was not the first announcement of this truth of truths. All through his public ministry he had declared his Messiahship and had

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accepted the declaration thereof made by others. At the beginning of those three eventful years he had heard with complaisant acquiescence the confession of Nathanael, "Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Twice in the second year of his ministry he had permitted the twelve to declare the same truth: once on the night of that storm at sea, when he chided the winds and like little children they went to sleep, when the affrighted sailors said, "Of a truth, thou art the Son of God;" and again in the time of that reverse when many of his disciples went back, when he turned to the twelve and said, "Will ye also go away?" and when St. Peter spoke for all, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." And twice in that same year he himself had asserted his Messiahship: to the woman of Samaria in those notable words, "I that speak unto thee am he;" and to the man whose sight he had restored, "It is he that talketh with thee."

But this is what with propriety may be called the official assumption on the part of Christ of the Messiah's rights and titles, and on the part of the Church the official confession of

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this central truth of Christianity. The significance of the blessing is that St. Peter's utterance is a heavenly inspiration, a revelation, an illumination, a conviction, a persuasion, all these to the same person or one or the other according to the intellectual and spiritual condition of the individual. As an original truth the Messiahship is undiscoverable by man; it is a conception remote from the function and power of the imagination. The conception belongs to the divine mind. God only can think God incarnate. It is one of the meditations of the infinite intellect. It is the dream of God, like his dream of creation. It is the strongest proof of the divine origin of Christianity. Neither prophet nor apostle claims priority of discovery or originality of conception. All yield to the heavenly revelation. From the beginning there were intimations, hints, in symbol, type-vision, prophecy, and expectation, but no claim to origination. That is a great saying by St. Paul to the Corinthians, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." This is true in the abstract; no created intelligence is equal to the conception. Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, "God manifested in the flesh." There is no room for controversy.

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The intellect should be receptive and not conceptive. And in the concrete there is to be an intellectual illumination, to every "one that cometh into the world;" and there is to be a divine persuasion, "He shall testify of me." Unitarianism is mental inability, an unwillingness to receive what is undiscoverable. This was the fatal mistake of Arius of Alexandria in the fifth century; of Socinus of Italy in the fifteenth century; and Riddle of England a century later, the authors in succession of Arianism—superangelic; Socinianism—superhuman; Unitarianism—human. What a descent! Error is always downward.

This conversation is illustrious for two immortal confessions—the first by St. Peter, the second by our Lord. The apostle's confession was to the Messiah; the Messiah's confession was to the world, through the faith of the twelve. This was the formal organization of the Christian Church. Hitherto his adherents were camp followers, attracted by the "loaves and fishes," by the last debates of attack and repulse, and by the beautiful mystery of his personality, and who forsook him when offended at his teachings and the fierce onset of his enemies. But hereafter his friends must form an orderly society with the right to rule and

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the duty to obey. In this conversation with the twelve he lays the foundation of his Church in himself, and declares that "upon this rock I will build my Church." This was dear to those with whom he conversed. He used an old biblical figure to represent certainty and firmness. "The Lord is my rock," sings David, and thirty years after the ascension St. Peter wrote, "Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." Both Christ and St. Peter quote that ancient psalm as applicable to the Messiah, "The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner." Having compared his new dispensation to a temple, there is a beautiful propriety in representing the administration thereof under the figure of the "keys of the kingdom of heaven," a very old symbol for knowledge to communicate and authority to teach, "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye enter not in yourselves, and them which were entering in ye hindered." And the noble figure is carried to the orderly possession of the temple and the deportment of those who worship therein, hence authority was given to "bind," or approve; and to "loose," or disapprove.

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These august words were addressed to the twelve. No special honor was conferred on Peter which the others did not equally share. He was the spokesman on this memorable occasion, as were others on other occasions: "John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him;" "Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us;" "Judas saith unto him, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" St. Peter's primacy is a fact and a fiction. It is a fact, as was the superiority of Athanasius among debaters in the council of Nicæa, of Luther among the Reformers, of Wesley in the Holy Club at Oxford, but a fiction as to headship over all his brother apostles. Our Lord's half-brother, James the Less, was Bishop of Jerusalem and president of the first Christian Council. As a writer he is inferior to St. Matthew and St. John in matter and manner. Twice he was made answerable for his ministerial utterances, and was rebuked for dissembling; he alternated between courage and cowardice, between bravado and denial. St. John was the better Christian, and was the chosen guardian of the blessed Virgin. St. Peter's glory was after

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his conversion at Pentecost, and his martyrdom is proof of the change.

What visions of triumphs rose before the twelve when the Master said, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In the council chamber, in the gates of the city of the wicked, conspiracies may be plotted against the Church of the Messiah, but they shall not prevail; the Church of the rock shall outlast empires and kingdoms, to the last generation of man. A magnificent future allures them to duty and inspires them to do and to dare. Palaces invite them; thrones await them. They are the allies of the greatest of conquerors; all nations will call him blessed; his name is to be great and held in everlasting remembrance. It was a moment of ecstasy; they shouted for joy; the future seemed clothed with the actuality of the present.

This remarkable conversation continued for six days and filled all hearts with sorrow by another unexpected revelation. Out of this sunlight of joyous hope and exultant contemplation the Master led his friends into the gloom of the cross and the darkness of the tomb. He had organized his Church, announced its cardinal truth, and invested the twelve with the authority to preach the word



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and administer discipline. Now he felt constrained to reveal to them his death, burial, and resurrection. "From this time forth began Jesus to show his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." Like unto this he had said in a conversation to his Greek visitors, "Except a grain of wheat fall to the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The path of glory leads through the tomb, a revelation to Jew and Greek. In earlier conversations he had intimated this by reference to Jonah and the whale, but now he speaks without parable or figure of speech. Whatever was the amazement and disappointment of the others, the ebullient nature of Peter broke forth, and as the Greek is, "he called him to order;" "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." His inconsiderate impetuosity had transformed him into a tempter, like the evil one who sought in the wilderness to dissuade Jesus from his holy mission. What a transformation! Was it sympathy? Was it unbelief? Was it failure to understand the necessity for a suffering Messiah? Like his countrymen, would he

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have only a Messiah triumphant? Shall the conversation end in a fatal dispute? Has the apostle so soon repudiated his noble confession? Would that some artist had photographed Jesus when "he turned" and with withering glance and terrible rebuke said to him whom he had called "blessed," "Get thee behind me, Satan;" out of my sight thou tempter; "thou art an offense unto me." It was a moment of unspeakable grief to Christ and of mortification to Peter. The twelve never forgot that moment. Peter made no reply, but was left alone in his shame, while the Master continued the conversation alone with the twelve, insisting on the utter and final renouncement of all earthly good, and even life itself; that no one could be his disciple who would not "deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." He was exacting to the last degree. No other religious teacher ever demands so much of his friends, such undivided loyalty, and none ever repays so largely and richly in the life that now is and in that which is to come.

Six days after the commencement of this conversation at Cæsarea Philippi the same was renewed on the summit of Mount Tabor. St. Peter's confession must be confirmed by some extraordinary manifestation, and the Master's

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claim vindicated by the transfiguration of his person, by the presence of visitors from out the unseen, and by the voice of God himself. The journey to this sacred mountain occupies three days, a distance of sixty miles. The route they took was either via Tiberias to the village of Deburich or by the Vale of Fejas, along the seashore and through the Fejas Mountains. The scene is one of unrivaled beauty. Two thousand feet above the sea, the ascent is through groves of terebinths, flowery beds, dells of stately oaks, glades of grass, and fragrant shrubs. The view from the summit is one of extraordinary grandeur, from which are seen the mountains of Samaria, the long ridge of Carmel, the Bay of Haifa, the plain of Akka, the hills of Galilee, the lofty peak of Safed, the Horns of Hattin, the majestic form of Hermon, the trans-Jordanic walls of Moab, the banks of the Jordan, and, nearer, the slopes of Gilboa, the glorious plain of Esdraelon, on whose verdure-clad border are Shunem, Nain, and Endor. Such was the landscape that gladdened the eye of the Master on that recognition day. It was sunset and in the darkness of the approaching night; the gates of heaven opened, and the excellent glory shone forth. Nine of the twelve were excluded

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from the scene, and they, like us, were to believe what they did not see. Doubtless Peter's anger had subsided, and he had forgotten the sting of his Lord's rebuke. He and the two brothers, James and John, were to behold the majestic occurrence and reveal it to the world. High up on the northern slopes, far away from the haunts of men, is a lovely glade inclosed by oaks and adorned with flowers, where all nature breathes a sense of repose, and where a holy quiet reigns undisturbed. The view of the blue sky is unobstructed, and there in the "stilly night," watched by the stars, the "Son of the living God" conversed with Moses and Elias touching "his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem;" the "fashion of his body was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening," and "there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him."



“Such as be of upright *conversation*.” —*Psalms*.

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“Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me : and to him that ordereth his *conversation* aright will I show the salvation of God.” —*Psalms*.

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“Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good *conversation* his works with meekness of wisdom.” —*James*.



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### V

#### CHRIST'S CONVERSATION WITH A LAWYER

"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."—John iii, 2.

HISTORY records three memorable interviews at night. A thousand years before Christ the king of Israel stole silently away from his sleeping hosts to consult the Witch of Endor. Descending the declivities of Gilboa, he passed over the plain of Esdraelon to the neighboring hamlet of Endor, where he sought the presence of the sorceress to comfort his troubled soul. To the surprise of witch and warrior the greatest of the prophets suddenly came from the spirit world. Clad in his ancient robes, Samuel appeared to King Saul as he had in other days, and startled both with the demand, "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" It was a rebuke; but the troubled king replied, "I am sore distressed; the Philistines make war against me. God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor dreams. Therefore I



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have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do." The prophet recalled the past; reproved his royal visitor for his many omissions of duty; foretells his defeat and death in these pathetic words, "Tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me." The interview ends. Samuel disappeared from earthly vision. Saul returns to his embattled hosts. The day dawns on the heights of Gilboa. The battle is renewed, and that night king and prophet meet in the spirit world.

In 1807, on the night of the 25th of June, two of the famous men of our century met on a raft in the river Niemen opposite Tilsit, in Prussia. It was half-past one o'clock in the morning. On the shore on either side of the river were the contending armies. The raft was anchored in midstream. By torchlight boats approached the place of meeting; in one was Napoleon the First; in the other was Alexander the First of Russia; as they landed cannon boomed, soldiers shouted. Two hours were spent in conversation that night on that raft. The details of the interview are unknown, but historians say that the august personages met to "change the map of Europe." They were marvelous men; one, the greatest military genius of his age, astute in statecraft,

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unscrupulous in conscience, splendid in intellect; the other, every whit the soldier, an emperor of whom Russia is justly proud. They parted. The map of Europe was changed; it has been many times since; it will be many times to come.

In the first year of the public ministry of Jesus there occurred in Jerusalem a midnight interview of more importance than to regain the fortunes of a kingdom, and of greater value to mankind than to rearrange the political destinies of a continent. The conversation was between a lawyer of venerable age, of high reputation, a ruler, a member of the Sanhedrin, of masterful intellect, and of immense wealth; and the professed Messiah, the wisest of teachers, the Saviour of the world, who was in his thirty-first year, and who had that day inaugurated his public ministry in the capital of the nation by a series of astounding miracles. It was Christ's first visit to Jerusalem as "Prophet, Priest, and King." When a child he had been carried there by his mother in obedience to a ceremonial law, and at the age of twelve "he was found in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions." His first public visit to the Holy City marked an epoch

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in the history of the world. It was a high day in the glorious city. From the valleys and the mountains of Palestine, from the islands of the sea, from every province of the Roman empire, the Jews had gathered to celebrate the grandest festival of a national character. Not less than two millions had come; they crowded the city, and their white tents covered the Mount of Olives. It was proper that the Teacher of mankind should appear at this focal point in the history of his people. He had nothing to disguise; he had everything to publish. He might have gone into the city when the ordinary population were pursuing the ordinary duties of life, but selecting this most august period in the calendar of the commonwealth, he suddenly appeared. His first act was to cleanse the temple, which had been defiled by petty hucksters of "sacred wares," and greedy money changers of small coins, who were driving their bargains under the pretext of providing the sacrifices for the people. Had they confined themselves beyond the sacred precincts of the temple, their trade was legitimate. Doves, sheep, and oxen were required as offerings by the ceremonial law, and the same law demanded a yearly tribute from every Israelite to be paid in the half shekel of

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silver, which the foreign pilgrim from many lands must purchase at a charge of five per cent for the foreign coin of heathen countries. The offense was not so much in the business as the place profaned by this commerce. These traders had invaded the Court of the Gentiles, consecrated to the worship of the Most High, the house of prayer for all nations. This irreverence excited the righteous scorn of the young Messiah, and his noble indignation burned like a mountain on fire. Having driven out the bleating sheep and lowing herd, which had filled the temple with filth and stench, he turned to the money changers, overthrew their counters, scattered their heterogeneous coins on the marble pavement which they had profaned, and commanded, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." This was passing bold. Had he come from the king or the high priest, there would have been at least the semblance of authority; had he descended from the sky in the sight of the multitude; had the silver trumpets of the sanctuary proclaimed his coming; but he came unheralded, unattended with royal retinue or martial pomp; he came as a pilgrim in the crowd of pilgrims that thronged all the avenues to the Holy City, and at once claimed

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his rights as the Messiah and assumed his authority as the "Son of God." There was no resistance; hucksters and brokers were intimidated; conscience smitten, they fled his presence, and only the "rulers" had courage to ask him, "What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" His reply was a mystery, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Had he pointed to the magnificent temple, yet unfinished, which had occupied forty-six years in building, he had power to do it; but he referred to the death and resurrection of his body, the future and final abode of God, the enshrinement of the Shekinah. Then turning to the afflicted multitude, "many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did."

Among the attentive observers of the miracles of that day was an eminent lawyer, whose name is forever associated with that of the Messiah. His majestic bearing and venerable appearance and the high position he held in the supreme court of the nation attracted the attention of all and did not fail to meet the eye of Jesus. His immense wealth and well-known liberality had passed into a proverb. All Jerusalem were familiar with one of such distinction, and strangers from Rome and the utter-

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most parts of the earth present at the great national festival saluted him as he passed through the streets or mingled with the devout worshipers in the temple on Mount Moriah. Tradition has preserved for our day the tokens of his vast fortune. It is said that on the wedding day of his only daughter he covered her bridal bed with gold coin, and it was currently reported that he could support the whole population of Jerusalem for a period of ten years. There is a well-founded tradition that during a great paschal gathering, when the water in the city failed, he went to a citizen on whose land were twelve wells, and asked permission to draw therefrom for the benefit of the pilgrims. Permission was granted on condition that the wells should be restored with water on the coming day from the going down of the sun. The condition was accepted. Good men prayed, and the friendly heavens poured down abundance of rain; but ere the wells were filled the sun went down, and the Shylock demanded the forfeiture that had been pledged. In the confidence of the beloved counselor the people were called to prayers, and in answer thereto the sun again burst forth in glory.

The night of that memorable day came on apace; the stars looked silently down; and the

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paschal moon rose in splendor on the heights of Olivet. All nature was hushed, and not a sound was heard save the chant of the Levites within the sacred fane. Anxious in mind and troubled in spirit, the lawyer left his magnificent abode, and passing out of St. Stephen's Gate, he descended the declivities of Moriah, crossed the little stone bridge that spans the Kidron, and silently ascends the Mount of Olives. Thither the young Messiah had gone after the excitement of the day. In some of its embowered retreats he had found a resting place for the night, attended by only one disciple, his personal friend, the beloved St. John. The lawyer approached, and through the courteous eloquence of his honorable profession he compliments the Messiah in the most deferential language, and the conversation begins: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles, except God be with him." There was nothing of timidity in this midnight approach, for it had been an immemorial custom for profound jurists to meet in the silence of the night to discuss fundamental principles of constitutional law. It was on the night of the day on which he had witnessed the miracles of Jesus which evinced his alacrity and courage; he did not

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wait for a more "convenient season," but sought the great Galilean in his retreat; he did not wait till the dawn, when the excited multitude would throng the young Teacher to see his works and listen to the gracious words from his lips. He would see him alone to unburden his heart and increase his faith. His first question was the measure of the light he had received. He did not say more; he could not say less. He had been enlightened by a Teacher whose wisdom was more than human, who "spake as never man spake." True to his legal profession, he assigns the reason for the faith that is with him; "for no man can do the works which thou doest, except God be with him." "I cannot say that thou art the Messiah of whom Moses and the prophets did write, but I esteem thee the greatest of teachers; I cannot say that the miracles of to-day indicate inherent power, but are the credentials of a delegated power." It was a noble confession; miracles had been wrought, and on this fact he presumed to seek the interview. He does not touch the Messiahship; his convictions are not equal to that large subject; sufficient unto the day is the light thereof. "Walk in the light," much or little, and thou shalt have fellowship with the Father. The lawyer's first



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question is the expression of high caution and thorough honesty.

Christ accepts the invitation to the conversation. He was not offended at the partial truth. He is not an exacting dogmatist. He is less concerned about the creed than the hunger of the human soul. He is pleased with the frank confession of the aged lawyer, and reveals a spiritual condition which he could remedy. He does not engage in argument to prove his Messiahship from prophecy or by new miracles.

Christ's answer is very remarkable. There is no relevancy in the reply. It is strangely abrupt and excites surprise. The answer is appropriate. The lawyer's conscience is troubled, and the young Teacher applies the remedy, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." It is not an evasion. Is it a lost opportunity to give the world an unanswerable argument that he is "God manifested in the flesh?" No proof could be clearer than he is more than man; it was expression of his adequate knowledge of human nature; that "he needed not that any should testify of men, for he knew what is in man;" that he could "minister to a mind diseased."

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The venerable inquirer was surprised. His question was fair, direct, logical, and he had good reason to expect a corresponding response, learned and satisfactory. It related to the "desire of nations," the dream of the world, the expectation of his people. For four thousand years poets had sung, seers had seen, prophets had foretold, priests had symbolized, and God had promised that Shiloh would come. As an expounder of the law and interpreter of the sacred books he knew the time of fulfillment had come. Who is this great teacher and wonder-worker? Is he Messiah?

His national pride was touched; he was offended. He was not ignorant of the meaning of the sense of the figure in the response. It is as old as his nation; its application is restricted to heathen converted to Judaism, but is offensive when applied to him, a Pharisee, a ruler, a member of the Sanhedrin. It has a higher significance not familiar to the legal mind, a spiritual intent not a revelation to his hearer. He is a literalist and thinks of his physical birth. But it is the central truth of the new kingdom, the re-creation of the soul into the image of the Creator. In his incredulous amazement he asks, "Can a man be born when he is old?"

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Christ takes no notice of the question and gives no answer to the impossible question, except in calm dignity he unveils the spiritual meaning of his reply, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." In all his "conversations" the Master adapted himself to the capacity of the hearer. To the multitude he employs parables. In the mustard seed is the significance of the kingdom of heaven. In the falling sparrow is the care of Providence. In the lilies of the valley is the beauty of holiness. He is now in contest with a mighty intellect capable of grasping naked truth, of discussing original propositions; yet the most astute minds appreciate apt illustrations. At that moment the wind is heard in the branches of the olive trees, and the Teacher calls attention to the sound thereof, and utters a scientific fact, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." And he throws his great soul in the monosyllable "so." The invisible wind adumbrates the unseen operation of spiritual forces on man's higher nature, but the effects of the wind are apparent to all our senses; and so the transforming results of

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heavenly influences are cognizant to all. He intensifies the light now dawning on his listener's mind by another figure. As water cleanses the body, so the Spirit purifies the soul—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit." This is his first announcement that in all the coming ages the sacrament of baptism would be the initiatory rite to his new society of true believers and the symbol of a purified heart.

Amazed at the doctrine of the new dispensation, the astonished lawyer inquires, "How can these things be?" He is now the philosopher and would know the process of the mighty change. His imagination is alert and pictures the difficulties involved in the proposition when applied to men of all nations, creeds, and conditions. He doubts the possibility and questions both the doctrine announced and the figures employed. There is a touch of severity in the Master's answer. Only twice in his recorded life did he indulge in irony, and this is the first. Half sorrowful and half reproving he asks, "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?" The great lawyer is silent. Was it the silence of umbrage or of conscious ignorance? He says no more, but is honored with the first discourse by the founder of the new system of faith and power destined

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to claim the attention of all nations in all the ages. And this conversation is the more memorable because it is the first time in our Lord's public ministry, and the only time, where he discoursed in detail and fullness on the great doctrine of regeneration. All his subsequent conversations centered here, and is minute and lengthy in this interview because he had for a listener a master mind capable of apprehension. He now speaks to all men and for all time. It should be no longer a mystery to confuse the mind, but a fact of personal consciousness. It is the eradication of evil tendencies, the habitual mastery of all virtues over opposite vices, the impartation of spiritual strength to respond to the requisition of the divine law, and the restoration of our moral nature—affections, will, and conscience—to what it was in the creation. This is a revelation to the lawyer, and he now discovers that he had misapprehended the Messiah's language and fell short of his meaning. He had thought of natural faith, hence the question, "How can these things be?" He failed to perceive that human nature is perverted nature, and that Christ's mission is reconstruction on the original model, the restoration to man's primal condition, with every passion and ap-

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petite gratified within the limitations of natural law. In answer to his question the great Teacher replied, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness." He stands for nature and vindicates the integrity of the intellect and of the senses. "We know" expresses the certainty of our mental operations; "have seen" justifies the reliableness of our physical senses. He speaks representatively in behalf of all his followers. His pure nature needed no rectification. "He is without sin," and creates a new expression for all his people whose regeneration is a conscious fact; and by the other expression, "We have seen," relates to himself personally in observing the operations of the Holy Spirit on the human soul, and the manifestations thereof in practical life. All his people are witnesses to the latter in charities to man and devotion toward God, and testify to what they know and what they see in daily life. The lawyer is silent, but a good listener. His silence betokens unbelief, and a mild rebuke is given, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" He verifies his ability to reveal "heavenly things" as he did to believing Nathanael, to whom he declared,

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“Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” If the silence of the eminent lawyer is due to his anxiety to hear about the Messiahship of the Galilean, his wish is now gratified, as if he said: “You are good enough to say, ‘Thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him;’ I now assert my divinity by disclosing to you the fact that I descended from heaven; I came from the bosom of the everlasting Father; I am older than the angels. True, I am only thirty-one years old, and was born not five miles from here; my mother is Mary, chosen to be the mother of my humanity, yet in the spirit I trod the eternities and immensities of the Almighty; ‘No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.’ ” How these words startle the learned Jew! With what wonder he gazes upon one who claims to be an inhabitant of the unseen world! He continues the conversation and intensifies his hearer’s surprise by saying, “I reveal to you another secret; I am the only man who came into the world to die; all other men were born to live; my mission is to die: ‘As Moses lifted up the ser-

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pent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.' ” He links himself with the mighty past, and declares himself the significance of every symbol, the substance of every type, the fulfillment of every prophecy in all Jewish history. The imagination falters to picture the amazement of Nicodemus; language is inadequate to express the wonderment of his mind.

The mystery expands, the excitement deepens when the Teacher connects his death on the cross with the love of God: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” The sublime mystery of the atonement is now revealed; the speaker is the paschal “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;” he is Isaiah’s “suffering Messiah;” he is Daniel’s “Ancient of days;” he is Malachi’s “Lord of hosts.” By a continuity of thought sublime as the claim is original the divine Teacher is assertive of his rights. He does not argue; he declares; he will agree with his enemies and confirm his claims by words and works unanswerable, but now he is declarative of truths symbolized and preintimated through four mil-



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lenniums. He opens to the wondering mind of the lawyer the supreme condition of eternal life; "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

The night wears on. The prevailing darkness suggests another figure. The wind that was sighing in the olive branches had suggested the invisible movements of the Holy Spirit on the human soul, so the prevailing darkness is the emblem of the mental and moral condition of him who is unconverted. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." This is not a reflection on the night visit of Nicodemus, but an impressive illustration of the effects of sin. His subsequent life demonstrated that his soul had been illuminated and that he was the first convert made by our Lord.

The conversation ends. They part at midnight. The paschal moon shines through the branches of Olivet. Nicodemus hastens to his palatial home in the sacred city; the Saviour retires to rest in some chosen grove.

Two years pass away—years of incessant traveling, from the Jordan to the Mediterra-

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nean, from Jerusalem to Cæsarea Philippi, up and down the valley of the Jordan, along the shores of the Mediterranean, through all the villages of central Palestine, "he went about doing good." The great revolution was on. Multitudes followed him. His teachings entranced the people. His miracles were his credentials. The whole Jewish commonwealth was aroused. Tumult followed tumult. The priesthood denounced him, while the "common people heard him gladly." The voice of bitter hate rang out from the Sanhedrin. Conspiracies were plotted. A price was set upon his head. Pharisee and Sadducee, lawyer and Levite, engaged him in debate. They said he is mad, an emissary of the devil, a deceiver of the nation, in league with the Romans, a malefactor, and should die. But children hailed him with shouts of hosanna; women ministered unto him; the poor blessed him; the afflicted testified to his healing power. His popularity waxed and waned; now all forsook him but the "chosen twelve," and anon the excited multitude would crown him their king. These things led to the inevitable. Officers were dispatched to arrest him, but returned to the court and answered, "Never spake man like this man." The court is confused; a violent de-

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bate ensues; the judges denounce the people, and in their anger declare, "This people knoweth not the law." That court was composed of seventy judges, whose distinguished members were priests, scribes, and lawyers, and when organized had a president, vice president, and a master to expound the law. Caiaphas is now the presiding judge, astute, crafty, bitter, ready for the crucifixion. The young Messiah has two friends on the bench—Joseph of Arimathea, an "honorable counselor, a rich man, who was also Jesus's disciple;" and Nicodemus, who had seen his miracles and had spent a night with him in conversation. Both had watched his public movements with liveliest interest. The courage of Nicodemus was now equal to his learning, and inspired the question, "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" The Messiah had not been arrested; there was no prisoner at the bar; no defense is offered; an unanswerable question is asked by a fellow-judge. The court is furious; his discipleship is suspected; he is taunted with the question, "Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." The reply is too passionate to be judicial. It is expressive of the old quarrel between Jew and Samaritan, ex-

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pressive of contempt of a small Galilean village—"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" What a reply for the dispensers of justice to give! This prejudice had permeated the highest ranks, for even the scholarly Nathanael had asked that question when Philip brought him to the Messiah. Nicodemus replied, "Out of Galilee came Hosea, son of Beeri, and Nahum, the Elkoshite, and Jonah, who saved Nineveh, and Barak, the deliverer, and Anna, the prophetess, who had seen the Lord, and Elijah, who anointed kings, was translated in glory, and who appeared with Moses on Tabor to witness to this greatest of Galileans." The court adjourned, and with a keen touch of irony the historian adds, "And every man went unto his own house."

Another year comes and goes. The end draws nigh. Such violent public commotions must culminate. The opposition increases. The young Teacher's withering denunciations and the burning anathemas that fell from his lips in the very court of the temple, and in the hearing of scribe and Pharisee, aroused the wrath of the Sanhedrin to volcanic fury, which broke forth with death-dealing power. The traitor and his thirty pieces of silver; Gethsemane and its agonizer; Calvary and its cross,

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appear above the horizon. The faltering moon of the last passover shines upon the illustrious sufferer amid the somber olives of the garden of his agony. He is arrested; all night long he is in the hands of the mob. The morning comes. The court convenes. Caiaphas presides. At the bar stands the prisoner crowned with thorns and bound. In pompous and solemn language the judge exclaims, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of the living God." Without fear or hesitancy the answer is made: "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto thee, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Joseph and Nicodemus are on the bench. They exchange glances with the Saviour, but are powerless to save him. It may be that Nicodemus is deterred from making any defense when he recalls the words of the Messiah to him in that midnight conversation, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." Witnesses are examined against him, but none in his favor. The case is submitted to the court. "What think ye?" "He is guilty of death," is the stern reply. The verdict is not

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unanimous, for the record is that Joseph and Nicodemus "consented not to the counsel and deed of them." They follow him into Pilate's judgment hall and hear him speak these remarkable words: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice." The two counselors are now joined by a third friend, and St. John, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus are steadfast to the end. They were helpless to rescue, but powerful to believe. The trial is ended; the awful tragedy is over; Christ is dead. The two counselors recall the prophecy, "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." They boldly go to Pilate and claim permission to bury their friend. Joseph brought the finest linen for the shroud, for the seamless robe, woven by the loving hands of Mary and Martha, had been torn from the crucified body and gambled away by the Roman soldiers; and Nicodemus brought one hundred pounds of spices for the embalmment; and the two friends carried the body to the peaceful grave. Not far from Calvary Joseph owned a garden, and in the garden was a new tomb

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hewn out of the solid rock, which he had designed for himself that he might be buried near the Holy City: "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. There they laid Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand." It was the burial of a king by these princely disciples.

“Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers.”

—*Peter*.

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“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”

—*Peter*.

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“Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

—*Timothy*.





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### VI

#### CHRIST'S CONVERSATION WITH THE RICH NOBLEMAN

"For he was very rich."—Luke xviii, 23.

"Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" "And Jesus said, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."—Matt. xix, 16, 21.

THE scene of this conversation is beyond Jordan, in a section of country rich in fertility, beautiful in scenery, memorable in history. It was called Decapolis, signifying the ten cities of the kingdom which were centers of culture and of power, and wherein were the elements of Phoenician, Assyrian, and Arabian civilization with Greek culture and Roman power. Palestine, which is between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, never excited the admiration or the lust of Rome, but the region of country beyond the Jordan, extending far away to the Euphrates, and northward to Damascus, was a section attractive to the Roman eye, where are

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now ruined temples, commercial monuments, indicating the wealth of architecture and the genius displayed in beautifying that portion of the country. There is Damascus, the gem of the Orient, the oldest city in the world, a city of perennial youth. Damascus never dies. It has been besieged time and again, and occupied by a succession of rulers, but is always young. Its gardens are laved by the Abana, and from out these gardens the pleasure seeker beholds the snowy peaks of the Lebanons, while far away to the eastward stretches a fertile country to the borders of the valley of the Euphrates. Whether the Saviour went so far north as Damascus is not settled. One thing is true, that he passed into Perea, in whose cities he performed most remarkable miracles, and delivered discourses which of themselves would render him immortal as a religious teacher. He was rudely treated in Judea, was expelled from Samaria, treated with contempt by the people of Nazareth, and in a moment of sadness he turned away from the central section and passed the Jordan into this newer region for his ministry. The Pharisee was always present, never left him, ever on the watch, lying in wait to entrap him. He was the constant enemy of Jesus Christ. The Sad-

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ducee met him in argument, and was content, but the Pharisee pursued him with the utmost diligence and with a determination to frustrate the purpose of his mission.

In these wealthy populous commercial centers he encountered his ancient foe. The Pharisees proposed to him a legal question, but one which involved the social institutions of the day, entering into the domestic life of the people. They attempted to pit Moses against Christ, by introducing the subject of marriage and that of divorce; they challenged his decision touching the legal relations of domestic life, and especially the permission which Moses had given for divorce. Always superior in argument, detecting at once not only the weak point in the statement of an enemy, but relying on the eternal principles of the divine government, and profoundly familiar with all the assertions of the Mosaic Scriptures, he explained to them the conditions on which the permission was given by Moses; and then by a single sentence restored marriage to its primal purity and its ancient beneficence. The answer was overwhelming. The enemy was dismayed and retired. How bold and strange the contrasts in the ministry of Jesus Christ! When these lecherous and voluptuous enemies had retired

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there came into his presence pure and beautiful motherhood, women bearing in their arms their tender offspring, presenting their children to Jesus for his benediction. Folding them in the arms of his tenderness as a shepherd would carry the lambs of his flock, he blessed them—whatever that may mean, it must mean much—pronouncing a personal blessing on them, and through them on the childhood of the race; then he declared one of the greatest of all the truths of his kingdom, that “of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Not “like unto such;” but “these children constitute my kingdom,” and whatever may be the rejection on the part of the adult portion of the human race, as two thirds of the race pass away in childhood, my disciples in the world to come will outnumber them as the sands on the shore and the stars in the sky. “Of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

Then came another contrast. A young man, sometimes called “the nobleman,” again spoken of as “a ruler,” perhaps a ruler of the synagogue, came rushing from the crowd, came with an alacrity and delight, his impetuosity indicating his earnestness, and the kneeling posture he assumed his reverence, and commenced a conversation by, “Good Master,

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what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" altogether the most momentous question to be propounded and the most difficult to answer. And what was it that had touched him? The answer of the Saviour to the Pharisees, the cogency of his argument, the sting of the rebuke, the purity of his assertion touching married life, the restoration of the oldest institution known to man to its pristine purity and beauty, or the tenderness of the Saviour for little children? These may have touched his heart, excited his admiration, opened to him a new vision of this marvelous man, given him an insight into the depth of his nature, and awakened within him this desire to know where rest could be found. Yet the young ruler was met with a rebuke. One would suppose that the Saviour would have received him in the spirit of the reverence with which he had knelt before him; but the very expression he used was a reflection upon Christ. He said, "Good Master" that is, "Good Rabbi, good Teacher." The Saviour could not compromise his dignity. His original goodness, a goodness allied to the goodness of the Father Almighty, could not permit such a compromise without a rebuke, and while it was not intended, it was his right as a religious teacher to defend the truth at all

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times. There is but one good—the Supreme Good. Why use that term in this indefinite manner, and apply it to me as you would apply it to any rabbi? Rather remember that the Supreme Good is enthroned on the circle of the heavens, absolutely good without limitation, without mixture of evil. The Saviour was ever directing man away from himself to the Father Almighty. When he commanded men to be perfect, “Be perfect as your Father in heaven.” When he commanded men to be holy, “Be holy as your Father in heaven.” So when this ruler calls him “Good” he points him to the Supreme Good of the skies. But as a true religious teacher he leaves him not under the sting of this rebuke, and the answer is, “Keep the commandments.” The response is: I have. I have observed them from my youth up. I revere Moses as the great law-giver; I am familiar with the story of Mount Sinai; the commandments are written on the palms of my hands; they are my phylacteries; they are inscribed upon my brow; with industry and carefulness I have observed them to the letter. What lack I yet? I want eternal life. I am conscious that my life here is transitory; that it is fragile as a flower; fickle as the winds; inconstant as a dream. This legal

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obedience which I have rendered has not brought repose to my soul. I need another touch—something else; I have come to thee.” There was a self-justification in the statement of this ruler, doubtless correct, or the Saviour would have disclosed to him his hypocrisy. Certainly a remarkable case for a man to say that from youth to manhood he had observed those commandments which enter into the very constitution of human life, touching life, property, fame, purity, and love. But the Master said, “If thou wouldest be perfect”—wouldest be complete, for that is the real rendering of that term when applied to man—if thou wouldest be complete, something else is needed; “sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.” I do not wonder that he demurred; but then he was not acquainted with his own heart. There are two universal propositions in the saying of the prophet, that “the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked.” It may not be desperately wicked, but it is ever deceitful. The most difficult study of man is man. The hardest thing to compass is oneself. It remains one of the questions in psychology, as in mental philosophy, that in self-deception what



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part of a man deceives, and what part is deceived? There is contradiction in the term. It is almost incomprehensible; yet such is the play upon ourselves that whether by false reasoning or the viciousness of our imagination, there is a part of ourselves deceiving the other part, and the part deceived is led captive by the part that plays the deceiver. The Saviour knew this; observed that this person was under this strange delusion, and it was his mission to uncover the heart. Why has Christ such a hold upon humanity, greater than any other religious teacher known to us? He tells us "what oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed." He does not hold up the mirror to nature, but uncovers nature; discloses all the intricacies of the human heart. He is always pouring out personal experiences, and always discoursing upon the thought-life of mankind. Next to him the two men that have exerted the largest influence on the thought of the world, and who to-night are swaying their metal scepters over the race, are two men that did in a lesser degree a similar thing—Solomon and Shakespeare. Take from them this strange magic power of portraying man as he is, disclosing the hypocrisies on the one hand, and the repealing ex-

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cellencies on the other; take from their writings these remarkable characteristics, and they would be weak as other men. So the Master in this case is dealing with the intricacies of the human soul, as the physician of the mind, knowing all its faculties, knowing how to approach it, how to touch the imagination or the judgment, how to excite the consciousness, how to stimulate the affections. He deals with this as a wise physician. This ruler did not know his besetting sin. The Master advances by proposing to him the human side of the Ten Commandments. He knew the response, but the response should be the key to his heart, the exponent of his character, the cranny through which the celestial light should flow to all the hidden chambers of his soul. Had the Saviour proposed to him the divine side of the Decalogue, there would have been no response, but, like a wise teacher, he lays down those propositions which could be accepted, and then pushing forward to the other side, to the divine side, of the Decalogue, he lets in a flood of light. For this man was guilty of the violation of the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other God beside me." The idol is that which receives the fullness of our affections, whether for personal

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gratification, for the extension of power over the thought and volition of man, or for the superiority of riches. In one man it may be wealth; in another, pleasure; in another, glory. Take the three great English statesmen of one hundred years ago. Had Fox come to Christ and asked him, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus would have replied to him as he replied to the young Jewish ruler, "Sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and follow me." Had the elegant and majestic Pitt come to him and said, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" he would have said, "Tear from thy brow the chaplet of this world's glory and hang it upon my cross." Fox cared not for fame; he loved wealth. Pitt poured contempt upon wealth, but he thirsted for glory. Had Chesterfield come to the Master and said, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Christ would have said nothing about wealth, nothing about glory, but would have said unto him, "Regulate thy passions and appetites according to the requirements of the divine law; pleasure is thy ruling passion; it is as God to thee."

How intense is this conversation between Christ and the young man, and, with the intensity, how great the interest! We may fancy

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the lines of thought in the one and in the other, for doubtless all the conversation is not recorded, and we are allowed to read between the lines to supply, as it were, the ellipsis; and one can readily see that this young ruler might have said, "My life compares favorably with those that are most devout;" and the answer from Christ would have been, "True, for two straight lines are two straight lines the world over. White is white, whether on the equator or in the tropics. Honesty on the part of the moralist is no different from honesty on the part of the most devout saint under the sky; domestic fidelity, patriotism, philanthropy, all these natural virtues are the same whether in the church or out of the church, whether included in sainthood or manhood." It is not possible for the unaided mind, unilluminated by the Holy Spirit, to distinguish between what is real morality, segregated from piety, and piety that elevates morality to the dignity of acceptability with God. One may fancy that he was confused when the answer came, "One thing thou lackest." And the answer in his mind evidently was that "the rewards of providence encourage me that what I have done is acceptable to heaven, for these rewards come to me on the

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right hand and on the left; my vast possessions—the product of industry, of frugality, of economy—all these vast possessions come to me in obedience to law as the rewards of that obedience, and how is it possible that I need anything more than rendering this legal obedience?” So the mind deceives itself; so the heart refuses the fullness of the light; so many a man to-day, taking his prosperity, running along certain lines, contents himself, and fancies his sainthood. But the answer comes clearly as a sunbeam that certain rewards come to certain deeds, no matter by whom they are performed; that we live under a general religion and subject to general laws, and that these laws are administered in justice; that where a law is observed there reward follows. There is a physical morality, and the reward is health, evenness of temper, sweetness of life. There is an intellectual morality where the mind is calm and the garniture beautiful, where all the powers work harmoniously, and there comes the wealth of knowledge on which the soul feeds. There is a commercial morality which secures credit and fame in commercial circles, where a man’s word is esteemed as good as his bond. There is a domestic morality, the virtue that sweetens home, that

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beautifies the fireside, that makes wife and children like so many angels. There is the morality of patriotism that elevates a man in the estimation of his fellow-men, whereby he consecrates his energy to the good of the public. These moralities may exist in groups or may exist in segregation. God has ordained in the constitution of nature that wherever a law is observed, whether in association with other laws or separated from other laws, obedience shall be rewarded. It is difficult for a man who prides himself on his morality, looking upon these rewards as so many tokens of heaven's favor to him, to realize that he is a child of wrath, and that after all he is but treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. This seems to be a great fact, that we are rewarded as far as we go; but then the thought in the Saviour's mind with this young man was this: "Go higher, and you shall have a higher reward. Your character consists of negations, beautiful and invaluable in themselves, but there is a lack of the positive element that will make you a companion with the Highest and open to you those joys which come from association with the Invisible and the Eternal." There is an expression of a love that demands utterance in devotion, that

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seeks communion with the Unseen, that brings rest to the troubled soul. Go up higher, beyond the duties you have already performed, to God your Creator; perform your vows to him, love him with all your heart, make him supreme in your motives, your purposes, your aspirations, and a new light will unfold, and this light will billow all over your soul, and you will be transfigured by the excellent glory, and this world will be to you a Tabor.

There is something gross in the conception of men who pride themselves on the correctness of their moralities; in the exaltation of the human at the expense of the divine. The grossness is that you exclude the Father Almighty from the center of your affections. You have no altars that burn with holy fire, no incense of praise to ascend to the throne of the Almighty.

The Master leaves not this young man in doubt. He knows his trouble. He sees his supreme satisfaction in the things which he possesses, and hence he demands that he shall be a philanthropist. Perhaps there is no part of the Saviour's teachings so basely misrepresented by a certain class of ecclesiastics and so generally misunderstood by the rank and file of churchgoing people as this conversation

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with the rich young ruler of Perea. Certainly this is not a suggestion of voluntary poverty, as supposed by St. Anthony of Alexandria, the founder of Roman Catholic monkery, and who taught that there was virtue of compulsory indigence. Nothing of the kind; the Saviour's discourse to his disciples on riches, following this conversation with the young man, is all against the idea. It is not possible for him to go against the whole tenor of Scripture, for the Scripture everywhere holds out the promise of this world's goods to those who observe the eternal laws of industry, economy, and enterprise. Everywhere in Scripture wealth is promised. The power to acquire wealth is esteemed a natural endowment, as the endowment of the poet or the philosopher or the orator. It is asserted that these temporal blessings shall come to those who observe these fundamental laws. It is not possible for the Saviour to have demanded poverty of the young ruler, because he knew, as we all know, that wealth has a mission, and that when consecrated to the noblest purposes the largest good follows. How were it possible for Christianity to advance in its great mission, in the diffusion of knowledge, in the publication of the Scriptures



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into all languages; how were it possible to rear temples of piety, houses of mercy, schools of learning; how were it possible to send evangelists to the dark corners of the earth to preach Jesus and him crucified, without wealth consecrated to these noble ends? The cry in favor of poverty is the cry of crime, against the constitution of the Church and the organic law of Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church has uttered this cry by which her membership is kept poor, while the ecclesiastical powers have been enriched. The difference between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church is this, that the wealth of the Romish Church is in the priesthood, while the wealth of the Protestant Church is in the laity. Advantage has been taken of this misrepresentation of the Saviour's teachings in favor of voluntary poverty as an essential virtue in Christian character, and indispensable to the completeness of the Christian life. Christ must ever stand forth to our admiration that he did not ask the young ruler to give his money to him: He does not say, "Sell that which thou hast and give it to me," but, "Sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor; not at once, but become a philanthropist; engage in this vast

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mission akin to the mission of the statesman and the scholar, wherein intellect and character are consecrated to the welfare of mankind; then thou shalt be my disciple."

There was no prejudice in the mind of Christ to wealth. If he himself was poor, it was to come down to the lowest and most degraded of human nature. Some of his friends were rich. Zaccheus was his friend, and a rich man. He does not hesitate to say to that rich Pharisee, "I will dine with thee." Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were his personal friends and followers, and were men of immense wealth. He never turned his back upon men because of wealth so long as they had character behind their wealth—character that excited his favor and commanded his attention. He does not say that the rich man cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, but declares that wealth unconsecrated is an embarrassment, is an impediment. Were I a man of the business world, I would not hesitate to devote all my time and energies to the accumulation of fortune. I would be first to rise in the morning and last to retire at night. I would be familiar with the market in all parts of the world; I would know the condition of all forms of finance; I would stretch out my

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arms and grasp the continents and the islands of the sea; no man should excel me in the accumulation of fortunes. I would pile fortune on fortune; I would aspire to have the wealth of a Cræsus. Duty to God and duty to humanity would demand of me such enterprise, such energy, in the accumulation of wealth. And it would not be hard for me to enter into the kingdom of heaven. If the entrance were no larger than the eye of a needle, I would be sure of my entrance, for that wealth should not be accumulated for its love, or for the power that issues therefrom, or for the gratification that might come therefrom, but it should be placed on the altar of humanity, to bless the poor, to enlighten the ignorant, to advance Christian civilization, to roll back the tide of evil, to assuage grief, to dissipate sorrow, to fill the world with purity, intelligence, and happiness. Wealth thus consecrated would have the benediction of God and the smile of angels.

It is usually supposed that this youth was lost. There is no authority for it. Two things relieve the thought; first, his sorrow. The sorrow was born of the light that came to his mind. He turned away sorrowful; he had great possessions. It was a revelation

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that produced a sorrow that worked repentance. The curtain is dropped; he disappears from view. Dante has no right to suppose that he saw his shade in the infernal regions. Some draw conclusions from scriptural facts without authority. It is enough for us to know that the Saviour looked upon him and loved him. Let us hope that he responded; that he went forth on this higher mission of philanthropy to bless many; that many will rise up and call him blessed.

And how applicable is this conversation to you, my friends; for there are men who gather within sacred walls Sabbath after Sabbath who are resting upon their morality; who have made no public profession of their faith in Jesus Christ. They are not separated from the world. Whatever may be their interior life, the external life is against the profession of religion. Do you, my friend, boast of your morality? But there is something higher. Here are two vines; the shade, the bark, the leaf, are the same. One has fruit, luscious fruit; the other only leaves. There is the moral man; here is the Christian. You are at sea; you would take soundings; perhaps there are dangers ahead. Here are two cables, both alike in texture, in strand, in tenacity.

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Throw them overboard; get your soundings. One reaches the bottom; the other does not. The difference is not in their nature, but in the length of the cable. What you need, my friend, is to advance higher. Ascend to the throne of the Eternal; give God the supremacy of your love, and enshrine him there; a new life will come to you, and your soul will be filled with divine repose.

“If any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.”

—*Peter*.

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“Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy *conversation* and godliness?”

—*Peter*.

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“Remember them which have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”

—*Paul*.



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### VII

#### CHRIST'S CONVERSATION WITH A WOMAN

"Then saith the woman of Samaria unto Jesus, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."—John iv, 9.

THIS is one of the most important conversations recorded in the New Testament between Christ and any of the people. It was the inauguration of two of the greatest revolutions known in the annals of time. It required immense courage on the part of the Saviour, clearness of vision, strength of decision, fixedness of purpose, and a consciousness of power adequate to consummate the glorious work. One was a revolution in favor of catholicity, the other was a revolution for the elevation of woman. These are necessarily linked, whether in this our age or in the age in which the Master lived; and it is not therefore surprising that the Master seized this opportunity, though apparently incidental, to make these two stupendous suggestions to a woman. It was the highest compliment that he could pay woman



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to suggest to her changes so radical in the social and ecclesiastical condition of the world. Had the suggestion been to a philosopher or a jurist or a statesman, our surprise would be excited; but to pay the compliment to a woman, and she a social outcast, reveals a phase of the Saviour's life and teachings which we are not wont to find in the New Testament.

Catch all the incidents in this colloquial interview. Let us first consider the scene, then the persons, then the grand conclusions. At that time Palestine was divided into two sections—Judea and Samaria. Judea extended from Beersheba to Bethel; Samaria from Bethel to the entering in of Hamath. Judea was occupied by the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, whose tribeships coalesced in his day. The other section of the country, called Samaria, originated in the reign of Solomon, particularly after his death, by the revolt of the ten tribes. During the reign of his successors these tribeships were subdued by the Assyrians. The people of the country were carried into the valley of the Euphrates, and colonists from the Assyrian empire were substituted in their places. In consequence of the dissolution of the country the wild beasts of the Jordan and of the mountains returned to their native

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abode, and the people cried to the king of the Assyrians for help from the local gods. The Assyrian king being a polytheist, sent a Jewish priest from his empire to intercede with the God of the country. The colonists became Jews by this means, and in remembrance of it they established a rival kingdom, and a rival shrine on Mount Gerizim. Mount Gerizim is on the west side of the valley of the Shechem, on the opposite side is Mount Ebal. The vale between them is a mile wide. Less than two miles up the valley is Shechem proper, now known as Nablous. Perhaps there is no spot in Palestine so historic as this small valley. It is the scene of the journey of Abraham when coming from Chaldea; there Jacob rested a while and purchased a parcel of ground for his flocks, whereon he excavated a well; and four hundred years afterward thither came Joshua with the triumphant Israelites to ratify the law. Ascending the slopes of Gerizim on the west side, certain priests pronounced the blessings while other priests from the slopes of Ebal declared the curses of the law.

As time passed on the valley became the center of Roman civilization and the rival shrine of the Samaritan Jews. Between the Samaritans and the Hebrews there was neither

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brotherhood nor fellowship. Whatever might have been the feelings of the Samaritans there was the most intense hatred cherished and exercised toward them by the people of southern Palestine. There is a tradition that the Jews of Judea were so bigoted toward the Samaritans, and hated them with such intensity, that they gathered into the Temple Area three hundred priests, with three hundred trumpeters, and three hundred scholars to curse the Samaritans with all the maledictions in the law of Moses. The Samaritans were excommunicated in the name of Jehovah by the most terrible imprecations the human imagination could invent. Jews and Samaritans were not permitted to eat together, to bargain or to marry together. Sectional hatred was intense. What a bold reformer was Christ—himself a Jew—to denounce the prejudices of his country and to stoop to hold communion with a people so thoroughly despised! But never did a braver heart beat in a human breast than that which throbbed in the bosom of Jesus of Nazareth; his cheek was never blanched with fear; he never quailed in the presence of a foe. With a majesty of self-possession, he was calmest when most in peril, strongest when most opposed. He made no ado in the inauguration of his re-

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forms, sounded no trumpets, but quietly laid down his principles, announced the fact, and then permitted the leaven to work until the whole lump should be leavened. This is the characteristic of the true reformer—beginning at the bottom, he laid the foundation broad and strong.

This woman met him at the well at Sychar, called Jacob's well, at high noon. Discovering that he was a Jew, she expressed her surprise that he would so far forget himself and his religion and the traditions of his country to ask drink of a woman of Samaria. But there was an underlying purpose in this, that when she pointed to the mountain of her ancestors and said, "We worship on Mount Gerizim," Christ immediately announced the fact that the time would come that there should be neither worship there nor in Jerusalem, as national shrines; but wherever man in spirit and in truth worships the Father Almighty that worship would be acceptable.

It is hard for us living nineteen hundred years from that event, surrounded as we are with religious liberty and largely delivered from bigotry, to appreciate the importance of this announcement and the courage it required to make it under the circumstances; but

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prophecy has become history. In the greatness of his soul the Master said: "Hereafter the universe shall be my Father's house of prayer. Gerizim may crumble to dust, and Mount Moriah may disappear from the vision of the world, but wherever the humble worshiper of the true and living God shall tread the earth or sail the ocean there shall he be accepted by my Father which is in heaven."

But we can account for the strong inclination on the part of nations to have national shrines. It has been so in the ages past; it is so now among the Egyptians, the Romans, and the Greeks; and now among the Japanese, the Chinese, the Hindus, and the Mohammedans. It is not so among the Christians, except among the Romanists. But as Christianity with its liberality spreads throughout the world, even that centralization on the banks of the Tiber will cease to be a fact and the sovereign pontiff of Rome will be esteemed as he should be, simply a Christian bishop, not of mankind, but of those who are identified with his communion. It was, however, a great change in the history of the world for the Saviour to say to the people, "It is not necessary for you to turn your face to Jerusalem or toward Samaria when you worship, nor is it necessary for you to make

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long pilgrimages to religious shrines. Worship where you are. I am wherever I am sought; the universe is my house of prayer." How sublime the Saviour appears to us standing forth the iconoclast of that bigotry which has done so much to injure religion! It has limited human sympathy; diverted the energies of those who would do good. What strifes it has engendered! What fires of contention it has kindled! But the time must come when the liberalizing spirit of Christianity shall obliterate the last traces of paganism; when that higher and better Spirit of the Lord shall reign in all the Churches; when there shall be no dominance in one or the other; but the grand thought shall seize the Christian Church that outside of all denominationalism there is the Church of the living God; greater than the Roman Catholic Church, greater than the Baptist or Presbyterian or Episcopalian or Greek, is the Church of God made up of true worshipers who fear him and accept Jesus Christ our Lord. Here is the announcement, therefore, that Jesus would have his people recognize goodness under any name and wherever found—sympathy with human effort to produce goodness and under whatever banner that may be made. Here is the declaration

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that whatever may be the denominationalism his Spirit is the test of character ; and where his Spirit is not, whatever may be the sacerdotal robes or the jewel tiara, or the loud-sounding professions, or the soundness of creeds, or the wisdom of ecclesiastical polity, down with them all before this majestic Spirit of Christ, "Wherever my Spirit is seen, in the high or low, there I am, and there I am to be recognized." Years must pass before we shall recognize this greater truth. But it is in the atmosphere ; it is coming on apace. Its precious breath ever and anon comes to cool our souls. When it comes we will look with shame upon the record of the past ; future generations will rise with astonishment at our bigotry, as we now rise in astonishment at that of the Jews and of the Samaritans.

It was indeed an immense revolution that Jesus inaugurated, himself a Jew, but not a Jew in the sense in which Washington was an American, or Wellington an Englishman, or Napoleon a Frenchman ; but a Jew simply from descent, because to that people were committed the oracles of God ; he was too broad to be a national Jew ; he was the most coextended man known to the race ; the only religious teacher that ever gave to mankind the definition of

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neighbor, and that to embrace every human being on the face of all the earth.

And this was whispered in the ear of a woman, and she a social outcast; not known for her literary attainments, for the brilliancy of her intellect, for her wealth, for her social influence, but from the record an outcast. Yet this great reformer appealed to the better self-womanhood. He realized that under the curse of crime there was a nature that was sensitive, and that would respond to his touch. He thought that whatsoever might be the exterior degradation of a human being somewhere in the constitution of that being there was a chord touched by his masterful hand that would respond to the long-lost music of Eden and chime with the music of the skies. It is an immense lesson for us to learn, to appeal to the better self of mankind. He evidently knew her character, and he disclosed that character by issuing a command, "Go call thy husband." Some say because it was not proper for him to converse with a woman in the absence of her husband, but he thus gently yet firmly disclosed her character himself; in other words, informed her that he knew her history. "I have no husband," she said. "Thou hast well said, I have no husband. For thou hast had



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five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband."

In those days successive polygamy prevailed, and by a shameful practice a marriage contracted to-day was broken to-morrow, and thus by those successive practices the baser passions were gratified and the social fabric toppled to its fall. It was of great importance that this divine reformer should take up arms against an evil that filled society that had the sanction of the great, the wise, and the powerful in many generations. He did it, and he did it bravely, kindly, firmly. The woman confessed her sin, but he did not turn away from her. He was not afraid of pollution. He was not afraid to come in contact with the guilty, and the shamelessly so. What a brave spirit he was when he met these fallen daughters of Eve; with what tenderness he treated them; how he dared to rise as their defender—not of their vices, but of their rights! When those judicial priestly hypocrites of the temple brought a poor creature before him he said to the woman, "Go, sin no more." That was his remedy. "I will forget the past; I will cover it." All that Christ asks of man or woman is to start from this point. This is his regeneration, the new birth, the new life. "I care not

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what the past records against thee are; go, sin no more."

That restored the woman, gave her a new life, a social elevation to become an influential factor in society—an immense change! What glorious courage! We have no such courage in this our day. Vice in man and vice in woman are considered two things. Such are the base and heartless standards in society that this criminal discrimination is made between the polluted man and the polluted woman. One is accepted, and the other is rejected. But the Lord Jesus, appreciating individual rights as well as possessions, said to the woman, "Go, sin no more." With what tenderness he treated Mary of Magdala! There are Jewish traditions to the effect that she was a person of extraordinary beauty, immense fortune, great influence, but terribly afflicted. He made her a disciple; received her as a companion. Who wonders that she was last at the cross and first at the tomb? Who wonders that he rewarded her fidelity, loyalty, and love by a mission of good to human beings—"Go tell my brethren that I am risen from the dead?" Who of this age and generation among all the philanthropists would have the courage to follow the example of Jesus in

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this regard? Condone a man, condemn a woman, is the false morality of this sinful age. No braver defender of woman ever appeared than Christ our Lord. How tenderly he treated her! How he exerted his power to heal her! With what respect he addressed her! How he lifted her to companionship, friendship, discipleship!

Out of this great revolution has come woman's present elevated position. You, however, cannot appreciate the magnitude of this revolution unless you recall the condition of the world and the obstacles with which the Saviour had to contend at that time. At that very time and in the Jewish nation itself woman was a thing. Polygamy was universal under the head of successive divorce, and woman was degraded. Rome swayed her mighty scepter over the fairest portions of the world, but under its splendid civilization woman was not esteemed an individual; her individuality was not recognized. No voice had she in the government of the family; the father was the sole authority. He claimed the children. He had supreme control over her property; by marriage she lost all family rights, and could bequeath nothing; she was looked upon as sister to her own children, and her husband's

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adopted daughter. She married a master who had power over her life. At her trial he was the presiding judge. Such was Rome in jurisprudence touching woman, and yet Christ in the very presence of the Roman proconsul of Palestine, the representative of the Cæsars, dared to inaugurate this great revolution. He restored marriage to its original state of purity, and opposed both kinds of polygamy, simultaneous and progressive. He declared that marriage is a state rather than an act; an institution rather than a law; that marriage is not a convenience nor a business transaction nor a personal contract; that it is a civil rite, founded on a religious institution ordained by the Almighty. That it is neither an accident nor a human device; nor merely a civil rite, but founded on equal rights for the protection of childhood, and to create a sweet companionship in society and multiply human happiness. He was bold to assert that marriage is indissoluble except for one cause, and thereby gave permanence to the institution.

And what was the Roman opinion of woman? Of Gaius, who, after all, must be regarded as the father of Roman jurisprudence—think of this eminent man who was in his glory in the days of Antonius Pius, who ex-

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cused woman's degradation "because of her levity of mind." Think of Cicero, the eloquent, who assigned the reason "because of her infirmity of purpose." Think of Seneca, sometimes called grand old Seneca, who stigmatized "woman as a foolish wild creature, incapable of self-control." And it was Cato who was accustomed to say, "Slacken the rein on woman and you will afterward strive in vain to check the mad career of that unreasoning animal." No marvel that Cato committed suicide. A man who thus esteemed woman deserved to die. In the best days of the Roman empire divorce was the end of marriage. Cicero repudiated Terentia, and having married Publili, he divorced her and with her fortune paid his debts. Now recall the magnificent courage of Christ to stand up against a hundred and twenty millions of people, representing the highest culture and the most imposing cult of the age, and daring to elevate woman to her true position.

It is true the Greeks had passed out of power, but then Greek civilization continued with that of the Roman, and the ideas of the Greeks still prevailed; while it is true that among the Greeks woman was not degraded as among the Romans, yet she was the slave of

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her husband; she was reared in ignorance and doomed to domestic drudgery. She was not permitted to sit at table with her husband's friends. It was Plato, sometimes called "the divine," who said that marriage is a "physico-political institution." Ah! Plato, alas, you make marriage physical, not domestic, nor social, nor moral. What was the opinion of the best of the Greeks as to woman? Homer deals much in marriages, but without a trace of the sentiment of love. He sings of Hector and Andromache, of Menelaus and Helen, but without love. Telemachus tells his mother not to speak in the presence of man. It was Hesiod, eight hundred years before Christ, who said, "Women are a cursed brood and the chief scourge of mankind." Eschylus, one of the three great tragic poets of Greece, said, "Woman is the chief scourge of the state and home." It is an old tradition that Socrates daily thanked the gods that he had been born neither a slave nor a woman. Female culture was confined to women of low repute, as indicated by the intercourse between Socrates and Theodora, Plato and Aspasia. What pictures for an artist! Plato at the feet of Aspasia, and Mary Magdalene at the feet of Christ.

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Now look at the changed condition of woman and of Christianity. What did Christ do for Roman womanhood? Under the discipline of the early Church woman was protected in her rights of marriage. She was among the most heroic confessors for Christ, and became a recognized factor in the Church. Whatever may be the world's opinion of the conversion of Constantine the Great, we must accord to him the glory, for immediately on his accession he restored his mother to the throne. His father had banished Helen and had taken Theodora to his arms; but Constantine said, "My mother will return and sit by my side upon the throne of empire." It was this son of Helen who spread Christianity through the East. In the Pandicts of Justinian is the first legislative expression under Christianity of the elevation of womanhood, and to all that she has attained was born of that Christian command. This was the beginning of that merciful legislation which now prevails, after a long and desperate struggle against prejudice, custom, and law. Let us recall Priscilla and the eloquent Apollos, Paula and St. Jerome, the historian, Monica and St. Augustine, the great, and what was the influence of Christianity upon Grecian womanhood? Recall Phebe, the bearer of in-

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spired letters written by St. Paul, and Lydia of Thyatira, and the magnificent vindication of the duality of marriage by the apostle Paul in his letters to the Greek churches.

It is the boast of some to praise the treatment of women under Teutonic civilization. It is true that Teutonic chivalry was born of noble impulses, yet through all the settlements of the Teutons there was the deepest oppression, for woman was a slave. She had no rights. The slayer of a mother was fined six dollars. The slayer of a woman too old or too young to be a mother was fined two dollars. The unfaithful wife was driven nude through the streets and beaten with rods by her husband. The husband was an absolute tyrant. He could put out the eyes and break the limbs of a wife. Among the Teutons wives were purchased. The wife was a mate to her lord, sitting at his feet at meals; she was the slave of his whims. He could sell, punish, or slay her, and his song was:

I will be master of what is mine own ;  
She is my goods, my chattels ; she is my house,  
My household stuff, my field, my barn,  
My horse, my ox, my ass, my everything.

And what did Christianity do for the Teutonic tribes? It preserved whatever was ex-



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cellent in the civilization thereof—the pricelessness of virtue, for that was a fact; and reverence for woman as a prophetess, and confidence in her in times of great public peril. It gave monogamy for polygamy; broke the tyranny of the husband; rescued the wife from the shambles, and made her man's companion. Look at Christian womanhood in Germany to-day, and recall the distinguished writers, the illustrious missionaries, and the wives who have graced palaces and honored every position in life.

Now look at the condition of woman under the best religions of the East. Buddha is lauded to the skies as great and good; but he divorced his wife, Yosodhara, and forsook her and his child. He did not permit woman to enter his new society till twenty-five years after he began his mission, and then only as a nun; and twice he refused admission to his foster mother, because it would give occasion to speak against his institutions, and she was permitted to enter the community after an intercession of forty years, and then through the importunities of the good Ananda. He held out one hope for woman, that through the process of transmigration she might become a man in the next world. For centuries woman

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in India has been an outcast. Widowhood was esteemed a crime, and the birth of a daughter was regarded the cause of lamentation. And has woman's condition been desirable under Brahmanism? The infanticide of girlhood and the immolation of widowhood indicate the fearful degradation that has prevailed in that fair land. In some parts of India two thirds of the female children were strangled or drowned; and it is estimated that more than a thousand widows were burned to death in a given year. The Shastra says that she must revere her husband as she would a god; when in his presence she must keep her eyes upon him to receive his commands. When he speaks she must be silent. If she speaks unkind to him, she must be divorced without delay; when he is dead she must burn on his funeral pyre.

And is woman's condition better in China under the teachings of Confucius? All history is in proof that she is proscribed and otherwise degraded; and Confucius laid it down as a law that she could be divorced if she talked too much. And has Mohammed done better for woman? It was one of his favorite sayings that "women are the whips of the devil. Trust neither a king nor a horse nor a woman.

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Men shall have the preeminence above woman. Congratulations when a son is born; condolence when a daughter comes into the world." Say what you may about all these religious systems; it is a historic fact that in all those antichristian lands the female half of the human race is degraded under an inhuman superstition.

But what has Christ done for womanhood in all those countries? The missionary has rescued childhood from infanticide and widowhood from the burning pyre, and demanded that woman shall be recognized as man's equal—"God's first, best gift to man." And just in proportion as this great revolution which Christ inaugurated in Samaria is accepted, woman is elevated to companionship with man and to all her rights as an individual.

Woman should be a revolutionist. It is too much to expect of man's hardier nature, but not too much to expect that under the softening influences of the teachings of Christ that this recognition will be a sublime fact.

“ But tell us, thou bird of the solemn strain,  
Can those who have loved forget ?  
We call, but they answer not again—  
Do they love—do they love us yet ?  
We call them far through the silent night,  
But they speak not from cave nor hill ;  
We know—we know that their land is bright,  
But say, do they love there still ? ”

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[Cicero's apostrophe to his daughter.]

“ Thou, my daughter, now separated from me, not deserting me, but sometimes looking back, *lead me* where I may yet enjoy the conversation and sight of thee.”

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“ Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.”

—*Paul.*



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### VIII

#### CHRIST'S CONVERSATION WITH THE SADDUCEES—HAVE WE HEARD FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE?

"God is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him."—Luke xx, 38.

AT the time of this conversation the Jewish nation was divided into three branches ecclesiastically—the Essenes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees. The Essenes were spiritualists, predestinarians, mystics. They pretended to discover truth between the lines, and to spiritualize all the literal statements in the Bible. They were a harmless people, exact in their morality, good citizens, noble in their charities, sincere in their devotions, and it is supposed by some that Christ belonged to this branch of the nation, or, in other words, largely sympathized with it. We have no authority for this; it is a supposition. The Pharisees were by far the most numerous, popular, powerful portion of the Jewish nation. Centuries before they had separated from the rest of their countrymen to maintain in greater purity

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and majesty the divine law. They came forth in a time of degeneracy, and determined to maintain the Mosaic institutions as the hope of the Jewish commonwealth. They had a vision that that commonwealth was for all time; and in that vision they were correct, for it was not the purpose of the Almighty that that commonwealth should pass away at the coming of the Messiah, but rather that that nation should have received Christ, and Christ should sanctify it by his presence and his doctrines. And what a magnificent nationality it would have been, with its sanitary provisions, with its wise jurisprudence, with its domestic regulations, with all things essential to a national life under the guidance of the divine Teacher!

The word Pharisee is from a Hebrew word which signifies "to separate," and in the word is the history of this branch of the Jewish people. But the priestly, aristocratic, domineering—the materialistic, the earth and time loving portion of the Jewish nation—were the Sadducees. They were the descendants from Zadok, it is said, and they followed the teachings of Antigonus, who denied certain essential things held by the Pharisees and taught by Christianity. They were the materialists of

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the day, as the Pharisees were the ritualists. These Sadducees were the rationalists, and yet they were the priests. They were the descendants of Aaron; they stood nearest to the altar; they entered the Holy of Holies. The Sadducees wore the Urim and Thummim, and pretended to hold communion with the Invisible. Yet they were heterodox; they were apostate; they lived for the time. They are another example of the fact that priests have been the greatest benefactors and vilest malefactors in the annals of time; for, while priests have been the guide of princes and nations, the illumination of homes, and the consolation of the suffering, yet priests have been guilty of all the crimes known in the criminal code. They have conspired against nations; they have instituted rebellions; they have created insurrections; they have inflamed the passions of the people to fly to war; they have overthrown kingdoms; they have placed the crown of authority upon the unworthy; they have perpetrated treason, committed murder, and their record of crime is altogether the most ghastly and damnable in the annals of time. The priesthood does not make the man; the man makes the priesthood. The priesthood is a function; it is a calling, a position of power,



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and yet the influence of that power for weal or woe depends upon the incumbent. It is therefore one of the great truths of Christianity, and especially of Protestant Christianity, that the people are greater than the Church, greater than the priesthood; that private judgment is a sacred fact, and that the laymen of the Church are to exercise their judgment upon the clergy as to what the clergy teach and what the clergy do, whether their life comports with the sublime principles of Christianity, and whether the utterances of their lips are in harmony with the teachings of Jesus; and just in proportion as this the great Protestant truth—the right of private judgment and the right and authority of the laity—gains dominance in society the priesthood is pure, full of charity, found within the limits of sobriety, and are benefactors.

Think! this conversation was with the priesthood of Jerusalem, with the Sadducees, the descendants of Aaron, and these persons denied three essential things characteristic of the Jewish faith, and taught anew by the Saviour Jesus Christ. In the first place, they denied the existence of angels, one of the most familiar truths in the Old Testament—scarcely a book in the Old Testament in which there

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is not a record of the visitation of angels to men. From the Garden of Eden on to the final annals of the sacred canon by Malachi, these angelic visitors came—came daily, came in the common concerns of life, came to widows, came to orphans, to peasants, to princes, to priests, and came for individuals and for nations. It is a record as well avouched as any record we have, and to eliminate angelic visitations from the Old Testament would be the annihilation of the Old Testament. It is not for me to account how this handful of Jewish teachers could stand up before the multitude of a nation and deny a fact so palpable, and call in question the existence of those beings who are numbered by millions, who were said to be as flames of fire, who stand in the presence of Jehovah, who have aims, who have missions, who exert a positive influence upon the thought and upon the character of mankind; and yet such is the fact, my friends. Strange indeed it is. We cannot account for it. It may go to explain the strange contradictions in the Church of to-day against certain great luminous facts that are palpable in the experience of many.

Then the next truth that they denied was the resurrection of the dead. They came to the

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Saviour with a puzzling question, and a puzzling question may be the synonym of a difficulty. Many a man has lost the balance of his faith by a question which is puzzling in its character—puzzling to him—and which he has allowed to grow into a difficulty. The best commentators deny the fact that was stated. They said there were seven brethren who, according to the Levitical law, married in succession the same woman. This is what they stated, but the commentators deny the fact. The Sadducees should have said to the Master, “supposing.” They should have hypothecated the case instead of asserting it as an historical fact. So they quote to him the law of Moses, with no respect for Moses, no respect for the truth they were using. But they supposed that they could propound a question to the great Teacher which he could not answer. So they say, “In the resurrection whose wife shall she be?” There is no tartness in the Saviour’s reply, no bitterness whatever. You observe that when he replies to the Pharisees there is an acrimony. Whatever you can say against the Sadducees you cannot say they were hypocrites. The Pharisees were. They made broad their phylacteries; they stood at the corners of the streets and made long prayers, and

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hence he withered them with his denunciation; he split their dignities with the thunderbolts of his wrath; he excoriated them with the words of his displeasure. But these Sadducees are treated differently, and he said unto them, "Ye do err, first, not knowing the Scriptures, and, secondly, not knowing the power of God." And then in his quiet, gentle way he goes on to explain to them how they have erred; that marriage belongs to earth and time; that whatever may be the atmosphere of love beyond the provisions of affection, the mutuality, the reciprocity of the affections formed on earth and time, yet marriage as an institution cannot be translated from this life to the next; that it is within the limits of what we call "time" from the cradle to the grave. Hence provision is made in the organic law of the Scriptures that, in case of death, the survivor is released from the bands and the bonds of matrimony, a clear indication that marriage itself is temporary. So the Saviour says, "Ye do err as to this, for they that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world neither marry nor are given in marriage." A revelation! A complete answer, an unexpected replication. These men were confounded. They had evidently hypothecated this case with the

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greatest skill and care, but the Saviour with a single sentence destroys the splendid fabric which their logical acumen had created.

But he does not leave them there. He then goes on to say that they who shall obtain that world are like unto the angels. In what sense? Angels are separate creations. We come into existence under a different law, under the law of generation, but these angelic beings are called forth. They have no birth; they have no youth; they have no manhood, no old age. They are creations. The only thing analogous in them to us is growth, the expansion of the intellect, the acquisition of knowledge, the unfolding of a likeness more and more to the likeness and the image of God. They are like unto the angels in this respect. Those angels never know what it is to say, "Father," or "Mother," or "Brother," or "Sister." The law of consanguinity in all their angelic regions is unknown; each one stands forth sublime in individuality, with all the attributes of a person, a separate, sublime creation, as in the case of the first man and the first woman of our own race. So thou shalt be like unto them, imperishable, having the elements of immortality. They neither marry nor are given in marriage. The Saviour does not deal ruth-

lessly with domestic affections. He was always tender of them. He knew that they were part of the constitution of our very being, that the welfare of society was involved therein, and that to cherish, to unfold them, were necessary to the well-being of the race. He does not deal ruthlessly with those; and it is barely possible that he more than intimated that these domestic affections should find higher realizations in the world to come, realizations of a sweeter union. To be sure, the language that we shall employ there will be very different from that which we employ here, for when you shall meet the wife of your choice, the wife of your youth, you may say, "This *was* my wife," not "*is*;" and she will say, "This *was* my husband," not "*is*;" and when you shall meet your son, "This *was* my son," not "*is*;" so that the grammatical expression must be changed, because we shall be like unto the angels which are in heaven. And there must be immense advantage in this abolition of the domestic relations, for those relations in life which have not contributed to human happiness, where there has been the want of congeniality and sweet companionship, whether from disparagement of intellectuality or other circumstances; death shall dissolve such band

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and bonds, and we shall be like unto the angels. And then the Saviour goes on to declare that these men err in another thing; they having denied the existence of spirits, they were materialists, and consequently they eliminated spirituality from the universe, asserting that whatever there was of life was confined to this poor earth; that beyond its limitations there was no other being but the Jehovah. Whether they were pantheists is not stated. Of course they could not deny—at all events they did not deny—the existence of a Supreme Being, but they left him in sublime and perpetual solitude. No angel breathed seraphic poetry in his presence, swept the harp in his divine ear, or separated the ether that fills the entire space between the worlds. God, solitary upon the throne of his universe, looking down upon this poor little earth, finding here beings created not in his image, but created for a moment, fragile as a flower, fickle as the winds, destined to live for a day, whose life shall be a song or a groan and pass away. Was there ever a sadder conception of solitude, either in poetry, in romance, in philosophy, than this of the disciples of Zadok, of the followers of Antigonus? Now the Saviour turns upon them and declares that they are mistaken in this.

Having asserted, first of all, the possibilities of the resurrection—that is, the standing up, the going forth—and, secondly, the existence of angels, then he says, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures,” and turns to the great fact that on Mount Sinai the Almighty said unto Moses, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”—not the God of their miserable dust that was in the cave of Machpelah, embalmed or unembalmed. For why should he be the God of a handful of dust? It would be unworthy of his dignity, of his power. You say that he was the God of the men who trusted in him—a beautiful thought; but then it is a trust that is past mortal vision. But nay, more than this, “I am the God of the living Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I am the God of the living, for all live unto me. I am not the God of the dead.” Were the doctrines of the Sadducees true, what an immense graveyard God Almighty would own—the biggest graveyard in the conception of man! But nothing of the kind; he owns no graveyard; “Let the dead bury their dead.” With him life is everything; all life is the expression of his own purpose, and he is not the God of the dead. These men are not dead; they are living—an immense truth! The



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Saviour brought forth a truth that has been the illumination of the world; that has soothed many a dying saint; that has filled the heart of the martyr with holy ardor and inspired his courage with the arduousness that enabled him to meet death in holy triumph. And this is in harmony with the whole teaching and tenor of Scripture, for everywhere it is taught in the Bible that life is immortal. I am aware that it is sometimes said that the Old Testament is a blank on this great subject of immortality, of a future state; and yet, my friends, if I were to construct an argument for immortality out of the Bible, I would prefer to go to the Old Testament rather than the New, for the Old Testament is a daily record; it is an itinerary of the communion of two worlds and the coming and the going of the angels, and the coming and the going of those that had dwelt here and passed to their reward. What a sublime testimony is that touching Enoch, who "walked with God, and was not, for God took him!" What a tremendous fact is the translation of Elijah, passing into the skies in a chariot of fire! What a revelation of the invisible world was that to the young man with Elisha, on the mountains of Samaria, when the old prophet

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prayed, "Lord, open his eyes, open the eyes of the young man;" and presently he saw the mountains filled with the horses and chariots of the Lord! And then what a beautiful description it is on the part of the psalmist, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thy holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." Nothing can be more definite; nothing can be more exact within the compass of language, above every argument and every truth. What a statement is that in Ecclesiastes, "Then shall the dust return unto the earth as it was disorganized, and then shall the spirit return unto the God who gave it." Nothing can be more exact, nothing more definite. And so all through the Old Testament is found this great idea of two worlds meeting, this coming together of the inhabitants of the tomb, and if it is said that too little is recorded, when the ancients died, touching their future state, the answer is simply this, that nowhere in the Old Testament do you find a patriarch or prophet constructing an argument to prove the existence of God, for it was a fact daily received touching the last hours of these illustrious ones, and such was the prevalent and universal faith that it

was a matter of course that they had passed to the realms of the blessed. Then when we come to the New Testament, Christ was life and immortality brought to light. The illumination of the past is intensified, and the Saviour stands forth as the great Teacher of eternal life. I do not wonder that some live in rapture over this great thought, living and listening to the footfalls on the boundaries of another world. I do not wonder that Bishop Clark of the Methodist Episcopal Church devotes a page of his book on *The meaning of Immortality* to this coming together of two worlds. I am not surprised that in the most tender and beautiful hymns in the hymnology of all the Churches—Greek, Roman Catholic, or Protestant—this great truth runs through them all like a golden thread. I am aware that the cry to-day is for one to come from the Unseen. Well, one has come, and what better off are you? I have asserted here that Jesus Christ had a preexistence. Supposing we cannot prove that; yet after his resurrection he returned. He went, he came back; he lived forty days with us, and after forty days he ascended in the presence of five hundred of his friends. Two years thereafter he came back and appeared to Saul of Tarsus, and Saul was so sure

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of the manifestation that he called him Lord; thirty-five years thereafter Jesus came back to John on the isle of Patmos, and he has been coming back since, and there are persons in our day who have received visitations from Christ. There is a Jewish rabbi in this city who has been visited twice by Christ, according to his own testimony. But O, you skeptics! O, you materialists! Sadducees! you people who believe that book so full of angelic visitations, so full of the communion of the saints on earth and in heaven—you rob yourselves of one of the truest and the sweetest joys because, as you say, it has been perverted by Christ, perverted by those who were tricksters, perverted by those who deal in legerdemain, who are deft in sleight of hand. You are ever robbing yourselves of the sweetest and the truest joy because of its perversion. There is no truth in all Christianity that has not been perverted. It is only for you to have the discrimination and the courage to stand by the truth, whether that truth has been perverted or not, and derive therefrom all the consolation possible. I believe there may come a time in your history that Jesus Christ will appear to you as he did to Saul of Tarsus. You are worth just as much to him. Your intellect

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may not be so grand, your mission may not be as noble, but your soul is just as valuable and worthy of such a visitation. Here, then, is the great truth the Saviour brings forth. It is a triple truth, asserting, first, the existence of angels; and, secondly, asserting the immortality of human affections amid the desolation of domestic ties; and, thirdly, declaring the existence of spirits, or of that great spirit world into which we are all so soon to enter. Enter! have no fears, my friend, have no fears. I wish you had my faith; I wish I could impart it to you. That other world is as real to me as the city of Washington is, without a shadow of a doubt, without a moment's eclipse of my faith. Great consolation! It sustained me when I have been down to the river of death time and again, and I expect, when the final hour comes, that it will sustain me, sustain me to the last.

“The dying thief said unto Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.’” —*Luke.*

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“To the blind man whose eyes he had opened—when he asked, Who is the Son of God, Jesus answered, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.” —*John.*

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“Enoch walked with God : and was not ; for God took him.” —*Moses.*

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“I have been crucified with Christ ; yet I live ; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.” —*Paul.*

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“Walking, talking, and seeing the Lord signifies being with and accompanying him.”



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### IX

#### CHRIST'S CONVERSATION WITH A DYING MAN

"And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."—Luke xxiii, 43.

THE argument for immortality as put forth by the Christian Church is an assertion that man is complex in his composition, compounded of the material and the immaterial; in other words, that he has what we call a "body" and a "soul." Whatever these terms may mean, they represent to us two units. This proposition, which obtained so long, has been disputed in all the ages, sometimes by greater numbers, sometimes with greater vehemence. The opposition at times has been so great as to characterize the age as "materialistic." You have doubtless observed the periodicity of doctrines, or of mental conditions relative to doctrinal truths. If this, for instance, is a materialistic age, the next may be a spiritualistic age, the next may be materialistic, the next spiritualistic. It is not possible for us to account for these tides in human thought and human belief.



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There is mystery touching the origin of human thought and its expression as to this belief. Thus, this thought really consists of great cycles. One thing, however, is true, that the Scriptures everywhere go upon the accepted proposition of these two units of the universe, and upon this assertion rests the Bible. If you could prove there is but one unit, whether that unit is spiritual or material, you would overthrow the Bible. It is immaterial to me, as a logician, whether you can disturb my faith in the existence of the body or the existence of the soul. There are persons who assert that there is no such thing as matter; they say it is ideal. For instance, that clustered column, it is asserted, is not there; that you are not here, and that that clustered column is in my thoughts, and you are only intellectually present to me. they would advance the theory so far as to assert that joy is a thought, that pain is a thought—and I have often wished it were; I would very soon get rid of the thought. So you observe there are two extremes; persons denying the existence of matter—and such persons are infidels so far as that denial goes; they contradict the Bible, and I would contend as vehemently with a man who asserts that there is no such thing as

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a human body as I would with a man who asserts that there is no such thing as a human soul. Now, take the testimony of the sacred writers and see how steadfastly they adhere to this great thought of two units. For instance, take the psalmist; the man who lived and sang a thousand years before Christ came into the world, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption." The soul is one unit, the holy one or the body is another unit. "Hell" here signifies the place of departed spirits; while "corruption" is equivalent of the grave. Then he sings, "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." How clear the Saviour was! I called your attention to this great subject in the previous conversation relating to the Sadducees, who were materialists. How pronounced he is touching the units in this passage, "Fear not they which kill the body"—one unit—"but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Soul and "body" are the units. Man is a compound of the two, while God is of one superior to man. So he says, "God is not the God of the dead, but of

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the living." Then St. Paul says "We are always confident, knowing that while at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." Nothing can be more definite more simple. Then he says, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, whether in the body or whether out of the body"—that is, whether this man (he is not now using the common place "soul")—"but whether this man was in the body or out of the body I cannot tell. God knows. Such a one was caught up into the third heaven." Here is a recognition of the two units, and here also is the great fact of levitation, of human beings passing through the air; as Enoch and Elisha were translated, as Philip was caught up by the Spirit, as Peter passed through the barred doors of his prison and entered into the house of his friends. And it was said of this man Paul "that he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words which is not lawful to utter"—paradise—which is equivalent to the intermediate state—and then he went into the third heaven, which is the abode of the blessed God. This man was sane or he was not. You charge him with in-

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sanity; then much of your New Testament is of no value to the world. To say that this man was mistaken in this great assertion—a secret that he had maintained for fourteen years—is to call in question his conversion, and all other assertions touching his religious life. And then, having had this glorious vision, having been on the other side, he says, “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.” Here the word “strait” signifies a difficulty. It is not meant direct. I am surrounded with difficulties. I am influenced by my associations on earth, and I am attracted by the felicities of the skies, and therefore I am in a strait betwixt two; and his desire is to depart and to be in the immediate presence of Christ. So St. John says, “I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain, for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.” These martyrs’ spirits were in the other world. How simple and yet how emphatic is St. Peter! “As long as I am in this tabernacle I stir up you to remembrance, knowing that shortly I must put off this tabernacle;” and then immediately follows the great visit which he experienced on Mount Tabor. The years had passed, yet it was a great reality to him,

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and he said, "Very many years ago I was on Mount Tabor with the Lord, and there beheld his glory, and there came those from the other world." These old Bible writers knew what they were about. There was no equivocation, no doubt, no hesitancy. Some of you Christians ought to be ashamed of yourselves; you are not worthy of the name of Christians because of your doubts touching immortality and a future state. For we know Scripture has an atmosphere of certainty, of certainty beyond a doubt, and consequently that in that certainty was born a heroism, a heroism that bade defiance to martyrdom in the most terrific form. And you will never reach the center of peace, of divine repose, in this life until your faith culminates like the faith of those grand men of Bible times, believing in a future life with the same certainty that you believe in London, New York, or Jerusalem. How wonderful the assertion of the Saviour to this dying man! How wonderfully the confirmation of this great truth is brought out! He himself is in the agonies of what we call "death." On one hand was a man who had rejected him; on the other was one who accepted him. It matters not what a man has been so that he turns with fullness of heart to

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Jesus Christ, breaks off his vicious life, commences anew. This conversion, this starting point for heaven, was made under the most disadvantageous circumstances. This dying man, it is said, was a youth who had been led astray by the inveterate culprit upon the left. It is said that this tender youth came to himself, and when he beheld the calmness of Jesus amid the agonies of the cross he exercised his faith and said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." It is said that this was an expression of his faith in the Messiah's temporal reign. Be it so; nevertheless, it was faith, for faith may gather around a historic error; faith may be expressed in an error touching the religion that has been taught another; the wood and the stubble will be burned while the essential thing, namely, faith, standing the test of fire, will live forever. So now, supposing that this dying thief exercised faith in the temporal kingdom of Jesus Christ, yet it was faith, and that faith was accepted, and the Master immediately responded, "To-day"—do not wait for the coming of the Messiah's kingdom—"to-day thou shalt be with me in paradise." It was then between twelve and three o'clock, for it was, according to the Roman computation of time, the ninth

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hour when the Saviour expired. The Roman did not expire until three hours after three, or until six 'clock, and yet the Master said, "To-day—ere the sun goes down, ere the gates of Jerusalem are closed—to-day, thou shalt be with me in paradise—not thy body, for thy body shall be thrown to the dogs or buried in some Potter's field. My body shall have honorable sepulture, because, though my death is with the wicked, my burial shall be with the rich. Thy body shall go to decay, but thou—all that belongs to the man, in the integrity of thine intellect, in the grandeur of thy individuality, all that is sensitive, all that is capable of thought, all that is susceptible of sensation, shall be with me in paradise." How remarkable that the history of the world opens with a garden and that the last utterance of the Messiah was touching a garden, for "paradise" is a Persian word which signifies "a place of delight." So he said to this sufferer, "Thou shalt be with me to-day." The false interpretation of the text is, "I say unto thee to-day"—there they place the comma—"thou shalt be with me in paradise. But this is the interpretation of the soul-sleepers, a class of people who say that between death and the resurrection there is a state of unconsciousness. Conse-

quently they use great impropriety of punctuation, and they change the position of the comma, and place it as I have said. To do this would disturb the whole tenor of Scripture; to do this would eliminate from the Old and New Testaments the grandest utterances touching immortality, but the true rendering is, "I say unto thee, to-day, ere the sun goes down, thou, man, shalt be with me in paradise." There is something forbidding in a dying scene. I have stood at the bedside of so many. Some were unconscious, and had been unconscious for days; others, ere the last respiration, smiled upon me and pressed my hand. I have seen the beloved wife, as the last breath escaped, kiss tenderly the noble man who in youth had led her to the bridal altar. So I do not wonder that Bishop Butler draws an argument in his *Analogy*, saying we possess these powers up to the very moment of death, and there is no reason why we may not assert that we possess them thereafter. But then we stand and watch one die, and we observe the respirations grow more rapid and shorter. The physician feels the pulse, places his hand upon the heart—he says, "He is gone." No sensation—the eyes have become glassy, coldness gathers on the brow.



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What is gone? Nothing that is palpable. It is more than going to sleep. We look around and see nothing taking its flight. We do not open the windows to let something out. There is nothing so tempting to materialism as such a scene as this, and to one who is not thoughtful or who is not grounded in his faith in Revelation a dying scene brings no strength to one who would believe in immortality. What, then, must the soul do in such an extremity? It must gather up strength in this regard and assert that substance is the only reality in the universe—substance and not form. The earth has form, but it is not the form that holds the earth intact; it is substance, and that substance is what we call cohesion. We cannot see cohesion nor can we taste or feel cohesion, but let it be disturbed and this earth would disappear, would become as dust, and fly into immeasurable space. I hold in my hand a magnet. I bring it in contact with steel filings, and I see those filings leap up to it as children to the arms of maternity. I look at that magnet; it has form, but I say, "Where is thy substance?"—the mysterious power. Thou canst impart that power, and I place a piece of steel against it, and part of itself has been separated therefrom, but it is the sub-

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stance and not the form. So I pass into the universe and see this great and magnificent system of worlds, but these are but forms of the substance, and that substance is God Almighty; for the only force in the universe is substance, and the only substance that has force is spirit, and the force that guides the planets and holds them intact is spirit. There is no other force known to man but spirit. So the soul gathers up itself, and when it asks, "Where is the spirit of my departed one?" the answer comes, "As I cannot see the substance of the magnet, or the cohesion which holds the earth together, or God himself, so it is unreasonable for me to suppose that I can see that immaterial substance which we call spirit, to designate it or to distinguish it from what we call matter." In common parlance, we ignore the deductions of materialistic science; and it is amusing to hear these materialistic scientists lecture on materialism. They use a *usus loquendi* which contradicts their very assertions. For instance, when they speak of the body they always use adjectives, and when they speak of the mind they always use verbs. One thing about them is that they either know grammar too well or they have got too much

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sense to speak of mind by adjectives and body by verbs, because they know that what we call the activities and the energies belong to mind. So we say that man "thinks," and man "remembers," and man "loves," and man "hates," and man "fears," and man "hopes." These are verbs, these are the energies. Whether we speak of the body as long or short, or fat or lean, or handsome or ugly, or fair or otherwise, such are the adjectives we use. Everywhere you find them—in poetry, in history, in theology, and in science. What problems these materialists are called to solve! What questions they are called to answer! But they never do answer them, and they never solve the problems. For if it be true that what we call mind is the product of organism, we are bound to discover a proportionate growth and decay in the one and in the other, but there are so many evidences—so many illustrations rather—of the mind outlasting the body. When the physical system is really a wreck then the mind flows forth in all its splendor. Take for instance Wesley at his advanced age of 88, when so feeble that he could scarcely move from his chair to his bed, yet the utterances of that wonderful man are remembered to-day by the Christian

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Church. It is only fair, therefore, to assert, if the mind is the product of the physical organism, and that the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile, that the decay of the body should be the decay of the mind; and it is only fair to conclude that every little man should have a little soul and every big man a big soul. But it is not so, for some of these men who stand six and seven feet and weigh three hundred pounds are fools, while some who do not measure up to more than four feet and carry a little body weighing one hundred pounds are philosophers. Then it is an argument worthy of our consideration that the physiologists have established a fact that has not been contradicted, namely, that by the law of attrition the particles of the system are passing off. It must be so when we consider the amount of food daily received. The transmuted particles, transmuted into blood and muscle and nerve and bone, must have a place, and these dispel the old material; and what is true of these hands and these limbs is true of the human brain. The mathematicians have attempted to ascertain how many impressions may be made upon the brain in the phenomena of memory; they have estimated about eight thousand impressions in a square inch. They

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say, therefore, that the phenomena of memory is only impression upon the brain. But then the physiologists say that the brain changes as well as other portions of the body, and it is for them to explain how the transfer is made from the old to the new, so that the recollections of the past may not die. The truth is that one of the strongest arguments in favor of the grand old doctrine of the Bible touching the two units is drawn from memory itself. And then the imagination—memory's sister—comes to the aid of the great truth, and while memory looks back, the imagination looks forward; and the imagination anticipates the future, and that future becomes a realization. For, if it be true that the brain receives impressions, and that, after all, the brain is memory, how shall we account for the imagination, which is not impressed by anything that has occurred, but which really conceives of the future, a statue of bronze or marble or a magnificent cathedral? And then, waiving all this, do you not know there is no such thing in the world either as memory or imagination without attention, and there is no such thing in the world as attention without will? Will is the substance of the intellect, the embodiment of the human soul. Such

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may be your absorption of thought that the old clock that stands in the corner of the homestead may strike and you not hear it, and there may be sweet music from one that is dear to you, but it may make no impression; or a picture may be placed before the eye and leave no image upon the retina, and all this because there is no attention. When a man complains to me of a feeble memory the answer to him is, "You have a feeble attention." Memory is always in proportion to attention, and attention is always in proportion to will. A man who has immense will power has a retentive memory, for he who has a retentive memory has the power of concentration of attention. Now, sir, I ask you as a scientist, I ask you as a philosopher, how is it that the phenomena of memory and of the imagination are dependent, first, upon attention, and attention depends upon will, and the will—volition of the mind—resolves to do a thing? I can remember the most difficult of all things. I can so concentrate my mind that within twenty-four hours I can commit to memory every word of an oration that will require two hours to deliver. I can so concentrate my attention by will force that by glancing at a single passage once that passage is transferred

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to my mind, and there is no force in the universe that can erase it. How true is it, my friends, that nature comes to us confirming these great words of the Master to the dying man. For there is universal desire and universal belief and universal conscience. When I say universal desire I mean the desire is never satisfied; and this is illustrated in the life of Herschel, who first had a small telescope, and then desired a larger one, and then a larger one, and his desire became simply boundless. It is a great fact in nature that wherever there is this instinct that instinct has a correlate. The Almighty never deals in frauds or in cheats. He always harmonizes, and the study of the harmonies of the universe is one of the most beautiful facts within the range of thought. Take, for instance, that universal principle that wherever there is instinct there is the correlate. Where there is a fin there is water; a wing there is air; an ear there is sound; where there is instinct in a bird to migrate there is always a country to which it migrates; and as the season comes around so you see the birds flying either to the south or to the north. What a cruel monster God Almighty would be to place in these birds the instinct to migrate north or south,

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and yet to disappointment, and have no north or south where they might go! What a cruel monster he would be to place in our souls a desire to live forever, and yet at last to cheat us! Where there is this desire there must be the correlate, the provision for immortality. And how universal belief comes to us! The few Sadducees were materialistic because they were content with life. There has never been a nation of atheists, never can be. There has never been a nation of materialists, never can be. And then you take universal conscience—how it bears testimony to this great truth! For the materialistic scientist of the day must explain to me the phenomena of conscience—why it is that they have apprehensions of the future, whether just or otherwise. When Solomon said, “The wicked flee when no man pursueth,” he simply uttered a universal truth, and Shakespeare took that up, and said in a new translation that “conscience makes cowards of us all.” What an immortal passage Shakespeare has given us in his dream of King Richard, where eleven ghosts appear—where the ghosts of Prince Edward, and the ghost of Clarence, and the ghost of Grey, and the ghosts of others come to King Richard.



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“Let me sit heavy on thy soul to-morrow,”  
said each spirit; and then the king says :

O! coward conscience, how thou dost afflict me !  
The lights burn blue. It is now dead midnight.  
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.  
What do I fear? myself? There's none else by :  
Richard loves Richard ; that is, I am I.  
Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am :  
Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why :  
Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself?  
Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good  
That I myself have done unto myself?  
O no! alas I rather hate myself  
For hateful deeds committed by myself!  
I am a villain: yet I lie, I am not.  
Fool, of thyself speak well: fool, do not flatter.  
My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,  
And every tongue brings in a several tale,  
And every tale condemns me for a villain.  
Perjury, perjury, in the highest degree;  
Murder, stern murder, in the direst degree.  
All several sins, all used in each degree,  
Throng to the bar, crying all—Guilty! guilty!  
I shall despair. There is no creature loves me;  
And if I die, no soul shall pity me:  
Nay, wherefore should they, since that I myself  
Find in myself no pity to myself?  
Methought the souls of all that I had murder'd  
Came to my tent; and every one did threat  
To-morrow's vengeance on the head of Richard.

Such is the great translator of conscience.  
And this is universal. Whence, my friends,  
this dread of death, if when thou art dead,  
thou art in the land of silence, where no

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voice is heard, no tear is shed, no soul is disturbed; whence thy fearful forebodings and why dost thou shrink back from death? Why not welcome it as an eternal sleep, as the soother of all thy woes, as the winding up of that moth-eaten garment we call life? Nay, nay; the Almighty Creator has implanted in thy breast this prophet of the future, and amid thy dreams of glory, thine hours of dissipation, thy life on earth and time, this prophet rises and in his sternness points thee to the future and whispers, "Let me sit heavy on thy soul to-morrow"—to-morrow, in eternity. And so, my friends, the divine Master utters a great truth when he says to the dying man, "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise." The Saviour is sustained by the universal desire and faith and conscience of mankind, sustained by philosophy, sustained by our desires and by our hopes. And remember, my friends, this concluding truth, that evolution and involution are always coincident; that there can be no such thing as evolution without a prior involution; that you cannot get out of a thing what a thing does not contain; and your theory of evolution is worse than vanity—it is the merest cheat in God's creation—unless you can rise to the noble

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conception that somewhere has been deposited in man that which is capable of the unfolding and the bringing out. So I discover a new thought in hope and fear and joy and faith, and therefore I say that there has been that which has been involved placed in that which comes forth. O then, sons and daughters of immortality, men and women destined to live forever, I beseech you to listen to the conversation of Jesus to the dying man, and when it shall be thy turn to pass out of the body, and he shall come to thy couch, may he whisper to thy soul, "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

“Carefully hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.”

—*Moses.*

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“Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.”

—*Moses.*

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“The hand of the Lord was upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain and I will talk with thee.”

—*Ezekiel.*

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“Out of the throne proceeded voices.”

—*Revelation of St. John.*



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### X

#### CHRIST'S CONVERSATION WITH THE SPIRITS ON MOUNT TABOR

"And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him."—Mark ix, 7.

"O FOR a glint of the unseen world!" was the expression of an eminent and despondent spirit. In this conversation there is more than a glint; the appearance of two historic characters familiar with the earth and well known in time; a fact rather than a fiction; a reality rather than a vision, it silences every doubt and satisfies the hope of the true believer.

The scene, the persons, and the purpose of this glorious epiphany claim our faith. The glory of Mount Tabor is the transfiguration of our Lord. Anxiously I sought to identify the spot of that marvelous event that I might look into the same serene heavens from which came the voice of approval and in which appeared Moses and Elias. High up on the northern slopes, far away from the ruins of the ancient village, is a lovely glade inclosed with oaks and adorned with flowers. Shut in from

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the world, all nature breathed a sense of repose, and a holy quiet reigned within. The view of the blue sky was unobstructed, and there in the "stilly night," watched only by the stars, the Son of God held converse with two heavenly visitants touching "his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem," and as a preintimation of his glorified body after his ascension "the fashion of his countenance was altered and his raiment was white and glistering." For nearly sixteen centuries this beautiful mountain had been regarded as the veritable scene of an event full of joy and hope. Rising two thousand feet above the level of the sea, the prospect from the summit is one of extraordinary grandeur. The eye sweeps over the mountains of Samaria, the long ridge of Carmel, the Bay of Haifa, the plain of Akka, the hills of Galilee, the lofty peak of Safed, the Horns of Hattin, the majestic form of Hermon, the gray walls of Moab, with the dark line of vegetation defining the banks of the Jordan; while nearer are the slopes of Gilboa, the rocks of Duhy, and the glorious plain of Esdraelon, like one unbroken sea of verdure, with its borders dotted with the hamlets of Jezreel, El-Fuleh, Shunem, Nain, and Endor. Tabor is second only

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to Olivet in religious interest among all the sacred mountains. Separated from the surrounding hills, excepting on the northwest, it stands out alone, having its base swept by the magnificent plain of Esdraelon. Its shape changing with the standpoint of the beholder, the aspect is one of extraordinary beauty. Viewed from the heights of Carmel it resembles a truncated cone; seen from the northern hills of Galilee it appears like one of the pyramids of Egypt; seen from the mountains of Samaria it resembles a segment of a great circle; while from the summit of Jebel ed-Duhy and from the plain below it is not unlike a terraced mound or a woodland park. From base to summit on the east and north it is covered with noble oaks and beautiful terebinths, not densely like a forest, but like open glades between oaken groves, adorned with grass and strewn with pheasant eyes, anemones, and amaranths. Its summit is an oblong area, half a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide, broken into charming vales and hillocks, enhancing the delights of the spot. Here is the scene of this memorable conversation.

And who were these celestial visitants? In that illustrious group were six persons—Peter, James, and John, who had witnessed the res-



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urrection of Jairus's daughter, and subsequently the Saviour's agony in the garden. Two of the six were visitants from the heavenly world, and rising above all in glory was the only begotten Son of God. Where in the history of the world has there been a convocation the subject of which was the most important that could occupy the attention of men and angels? Other subjects are of deep import to the present condition of humanity. Had Plato and Socrates and Aristotle met on that memorable mount, they would have conversed on philosophy. Had Bacon and Newton and Franklin met there, they would have discussed the advancement of science. Had Alexander and Cæsar and Napoleon there assembled, the subject of their conversation would have been empire. But how insignificant are all these compared with the salvation of a world! Moses and Elijah and Christ met to converse on death, ordinarily a ghastly, forbidding subject; on death, not in the ordinary sense, but in a sense never before known to man.

Who were these celestial neighbors? One was Moses, the representative of the divine law, the chosen leader of Israel, the writer of the Pentateuch, whose departure from earth was on Mount Nebo. The other was Elijah,

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the representative of the holy prophets, greater than Samuel, more significant than Isaiah, more renowned than Daniel. To him God had appeared as to none of the other prophets. He had been fed by the ravens; he had raised the dead; in answer to his prayers the heavens became as brass and again melted with abundant rain. He reproved kings and anointed those whom Providence had appointed to thrones. He had founded schools for the young prophets, who called him "father." As the greatest of prophets he was the teacher from God to man. When his work was done he tasted not death, but was borne away to the skies in a chariot of fire.

How remarkable that these should have come? Why not Abel, who suffered as the first and typical sacrifice for sin? Or Abraham, the father of the faithful? Or Melchizedek, king of Salem? But there was a manifest propriety in the coming of Moses and Elijah. Like our Lord, both had fasted forty days and forty nights; both had stood on the holy mount with God; both had been removed from earth in a mysterious manner; both were representative men. One had been absent from earth fifteen hundred years, the other nine hundred years. They retained their names,

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and their personal identity is beyond question. And what was the purpose of their appearance? In an event so imposing we must look for a purpose worthy of a God. It was the solemn and formal abolition of the prophetic dispensation, and the impressive installation of Christ into his triple office of prophet, priest, and king. To him all the types had pointed. From him all the laws received their inspiration, and he was to be crowned greater than the great. It was an ocular confirmation of Christ as the Messiah, and the preintimation of his future glory. This was for the Church in all coming ages.

This interview illustrates the profound interest which departed saints take in the suffering and glorified Christ. They were in their heavenly estate on the guarantee of Jesus. They came to talk with him about his death, soon to occur in Jerusalem. They were a delegation from the skies to ascertain if all who are in glory are forever safe. The atonement had not been made. Christ had not accomplished his mission. There was anxiety in heaven. Had the Saviour failed in his vicarious work, all those spirits who had passed into the realms of light would have had no claim to retain their thrones or their

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crowns. Could the Saviour endure the terrible ordeal of the cross? He was the only man who had come into the world to die. All others come to live. These delegates would return with an affirmative answer. Was their appearance to relieve the Saviour's own mind? Was his intellect overshadowed by a doubt of his ability to pay the ransom for the human race? In the garden he had prayed, "Let this cup pass from me," but in a supreme moment his great soul rallied and his noble expression was, "Not my will, but thine, be done." Jesus could find no one on earth to whom he could unbosom himself and who could fully comprehend him on this great subject. He had attempted it on a former occasion, but his chosen friend, St. Peter, had replied, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." St. Peter's puny "shall not" quotation is put over against Jehovah's omnipotent "shall." He needed this sympathy and strength from these heavenly visitors. His death was of such high import that these messengers spoke of "his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."

What did they say? Their conversation related to the nature, the circumstances, and the results of that great tragedy which within

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a year would transpire on Mount Calvary. It is fair to conclude that, as all the incidents of that tragedy have been portrayed in prophecy, these incidents were recited in advance in all their detail—his rejection by the Jewish nation; the last supper with his friends; the betrayal by Judas; the thirty pieces of silver; the Potter's field; the garden of agony; the midnight arrest; the denial by Peter; the steadfastness of St. John; the judgment seat occupied by the high priest Caiaphas; the judgment hall of Pilate; the dispatch of the prisoner to King Herod; the scourging; the insults; the buffetings; the mock royalty; the imprisonment for a night; the dream of Pilate's wife; the attempt of the judge to dismiss the case; the bitter cry of the Jews, "Crucify him;" the procession to Calvary; the nailing of the victim to the cross; the sympathy of all nature with the sufferer; the bitter salutation of the enemies; the fidelity of his mother and the other women who had followed him to the crucifixion; the final struggle; the pæan of triumph, "It is finished!" And we may suppose that these beautiful spirits were not content with the rehearsal of the tragical incidents of the event, but continued the conversation to the Saviour's descent into Hades to preach to

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all the human souls from Adam to the present time who had passed out of the body and entered the invisible world; then of his resurrection, the frequent epiphanies to his friends that he had risen as he had said; his sublime ascension amid the shouts of his friends and the rejoicing of the angels and of the spirits made just, on the right hand of God his Father. What a conversation! Did they ask in the question, "Canst thou endure this ordeal; are we safe in our heavenly estate? What reply shall we give to the countless millions that await our return in heaven?"

What a relief to his own great soul to be assured of this profound interest in the skies, and of his own confidence that his mission would be a sublime realization! How this interview prepared him for the severity of the conflict before him! No wonder that his countenance was resplendent with glory and that his garments were white and glistening! Such must have been the import and the tenor of this memorable conversation. We are not informed how long it lasted—doubtless late into the night, for his three disciples had fallen asleep; "And when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass as they departed

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from him Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. . . . While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone." How boundless must have been the joy of Moses and Elias! They carried the good news to the skies. What a welcome they must have received as they exclaimed, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:" and "for the joy that is set before him he will endure the cross, despise the shame, and come up hither and sit down at the right hand of the throne of God."

One of the most conspicuous and constant truths contained in the Bible is a record of the visit of men and angels from the other world. There is scarcely a book in the Old Testament in which there is not a word of the visitation of some angel to men, from the Garden of Eden on to Malachi. These celestial neighbors are represented as coming daily, coming in the common concerns of life, to widows, to orphans, to peasants, to princes, to priests.

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They came in behalf of individuals and of nations. It is a record as well avouched as any record extant. To eliminate angelic visitations from the Bible would be the annihilation of the Scriptures. Were I to construct an argument that two worlds impinge, that there is constant communication between our earth and the heavenly land, I would go to the Scriptures. How sublime the vision touching Enoch, who walked with God, and was not, for God took him! How tremendous is the fact of Elijah's translation, who passed to the skies in a chariot of fire! What a revelation of the visible world was that of the young eyes," and presently he saw the mountains when the old prophet prayed, "Lord, open his eyes," and presently he saw the mountains filled with the horses and chariots of Israel! How beautiful the language of the psalmist when he sings, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thine holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." Language cannot be more definite. What a statement that is in Ecclesiastes, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Nothing can be more exact. And the New



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Testament is a luminous commentary upon the Old. Therein the Saviour is represented as bringing life and immortality to light. I do not wonder that some live in rapture on this great thought, living and listening to the foot-falls on the boundaries of another world. It is not surprising that the most eminent writers have devoted their learning and expressed their faith in vindication of this consoling truth. This tender and beautiful thought runs like a golden thread through the hymnology of all Churches—Greek, Papal, Protestant. It is true that the cry of to-day is for some one to come from the Unseen. One has come. The preexistence of Christ is the most glorious fact connected with his mission. He had always lived in the heavenly world. He came to dwell with our race thirty-three years; he returned to his primeval abode. After three days he reappeared to his friends. He lived among them forty days, and then under the law of levitation he ascended into the heavens in the presence of five hundred of his friends. Two years thereafter he appeared to Saul of Tarsus, who preferred to die a martyr than to deny this glorious epiphany. After an absence of thirty-five years he returned to his friend St. John on the isle of Patmos, exclaiming, "I am

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he that was dead, but am alive for evermore." And from that day to this he has been returning to earth when the interests of his kingdom demanded such appearance. How strange it is that people who profess to believe the Bible—so full of angelic visitations, so replete with the record of the communion of the saints on earth and in heaven—should rob themselves of this truest and sweetest joy! What a strange skepticism, what a logical inconsistency, to suppose that this is a record running through four thousand years, but that the communication between the two worlds was suspended nineteen centuries ago! If these spiritual visitations were necessary for the advancement of truth and the consolation of the pious in the ages that have passed, they are none the less necessary in this our day.

Christ is the great Teacher not only of the immortal life, but also of the profound interest entertained and manifested by the whole realm of spirit existence and inhabitants of the unseen world! How exact and certain he was in expressions touching that world! To a dying man he said, "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise." How remarkable a fact—the history of the world opens with a garden, and the last utterance of the Messiah was

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touching a garden, of paradise, a place of delights!

There was a time when people living on the shores of the Mediterranean fancied that that sea really was the limit of the earth. They were accustomed to stand by the columns of Hercules and see the waters flow thereon. Now and then came a shrub, sometimes a flower, occasionally a dead body, and for centuries they said, "There is nothing outside of the Mediterranean—nothing beyond." They fancied that the two currents, one running out and the other running in, performed a revolution, or a circular current, and this was their explanation of what they saw; but at last a brave mariner pushed his boat through the columns of Hercules and beheld the broad Atlantic, whose waters lave Albion's white cliffs and wash America's enlightened shores. So the materialists of to-day, standing by the Mediterranean of life, say there is nothing beyond; but anon some flower of paradise appears, some branch from the tree of life, some Moses and Elijah pass these columns to astonish the people who live on the shores of this inland Mediterranean with the truth that there is a vast Atlantic of life and immortality beyond. The materialists of Greece were

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accustomed to say that the music is in the harp, but Socrates replied that the music is in the harper. The harp strings may be susceptible of musical vibrations and the atmosphere of musical sounds. The harp may be broken and the music cease, but the harper may receive a new harp and sweep new strains therefrom. So with Socrates, the human body is a harp, but the harper is within. You may destroy this human harp, but the harper shall have a new instrument on which he can play immortal music to banquet the ears of the divine Redeemer.

In this conversation on Mount Tabor the Saviour lifted the curtain to give us an inside view of the society of the blessed. These two men represent two classes—Moses the disembodied and Elijah the embodied. Their personal identity was without a doubt. Though separated by vast differences of time and space, yet their recognition was beyond question. These are sublime thoughts, great facts. We can never be other than ourselves, more than ourselves, less than ourselves. Moses must always be Moses, Elijah must always be Elijah. They appeared in glory.

Their appearance was not more remarkable than the great change in the appearance of our

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Lord, he himself a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and of his personal appearance Isaiah said, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." "His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." And now behold the contrast! "The fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening." His transfiguration body differed from his resurrection body. The latter bore the marks of the crucifixion in hands, and feet, and side; and his raiment was the familiar garb seen so often by his disciples. But now all is changed! His great soul shines out through his solar countenance, and his seamless robe, travel-stained and dust-covered, becomes white and glistening, as if new from the wardrobe of the skies. This was the prefiguration of his ascension body, which in the moment of ascension from earth to heaven passed the glorious transformation, the elimination of the earthly and the mortal, and the manifestation of that atten-

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uated body which is the inner residence of the soul, and is housed within this tangible and mortal body in which we appear to the sons of men. It is an old idea, and may be as true as old, that within our exterior bodies there is an interior form like the imponderable substances in the universe, as like electricity, magnetism, which passes from the exterior body in the hour and article of death. This is the spiritual body of which St. Paul had a vision. And it is a suggestion by St. Paul that we shall have a spiritual body of such attenuated matter that can be fashioned after our Lord's most glorious body. Here is the realization thereof. It is not possible for us to conceive of our continued relations to the material universe without some material medium of communication with our environment. Such are all the revelations of that unseen world descriptive of the blessed as recorded by the inspired writers. Behold the glorious change!



"I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord."

—*Psalms.*

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"I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

—*Matthew.*

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"And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him."

—*Luke.*

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"Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them. . . . And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them."

—*Mark.*

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"And Jesus said this do in remembrance of me."

—*Luke.*

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"After supper Jesus said: A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another."

—*John.*





## CONVERSATIONS WITH CHRIST

### XI

#### CHRIST'S CONVERSATION WITH HIS DISCIPLES ON HEAVEN

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."—John xiv, 3.

It is a serious question how far a future state can be substantiated independent of revelation. There are thinkers in the Church who hold that, independent of the Bible, it is not possible to furnish sufficient evidence that will be satisfactory. For instance, the argument is drawn from the development of the mind, but the fact that in the midst of development life terminates seems to be a proof that the soul ends its existence with the life of the body; and the argument drawn from man's boundless desire is met by the fact that the desire to live is natural and yet not gratified. So one by one the arguments from nature and Providence are dispensed with by those severer thinkers touching this great subject. But it seems to me fair to conclude that the Bible is but the confirma-

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tion of a great truth that is coextensive with the history of the race and prevalent with all nations. That is a great truth that Jesus Christ came to bring life and immortality to light; as if this truth had been obscured by doubt, and it was necessary for him to remove the darkness and let the light of personal assertion shine thereon. One thing, however, is true; that the great thought of a future state is common with the race and characteristic of all religions. It is therefore no marvel that he should, as it were, revel in this central thought; nor is it remarkable that on the eve of his departure from the world it should be the fruitful theme of conversation with his nearest and best friends. Christ was an intense lover, an intense friend. His friendship was pure, exalted, abiding. There never was such a friend on the face of the globe. His friendship was permanent as it was beneficent. He was not easily estranged from those taken into his confidence by rumors or by errors or by false steps, for he knew that these were the frailties of mankind; and therefore he could pardon a Peter; he might have pardoned a Judas. At all events he overlooked the foibles and, we might say, the sins of his disciples, because of the constancy of his love for them. There is

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an exquisite beauty in that passage that he “loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus,” and while it is true he had but few friends—few in the sense of being confidential—yet to these he manifested a wealth of love that has no parallel in the friendships of this world. And it is not, therefore, surprising that he desires to carry this friendship into a new life. So on the eve of his departure, knowing that Calvary was then casting its shadow upon him, and his friends anticipated the separation, he said to them, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” A strange exhortation! Who could help being troubled on being separated from such a teacher, such a friend, such a Saviour, who sympathized with all their troubles, who was wise to counsel, strong to aid? And especially when these men had abandoned everything to espouse his cause—had left home, and friends, and fortune—had accepted the ignominy incident to a new religion, and had shown eternal fealty to that cross which was the symbol of reproach and shame? No marvel that they were troubled; but had his religion been the most popular, as it was the most benevolent, the idea of being separated from one so spotless in his purity, so wise in his counsels, so benevolent in his acts, was sufficient to cast a

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cloud over the sky of the mind and to trouble the human spirit. It is not strange, therefore, that he introduces the exhortation, "Do not be troubled." He must have had a powerful reason for it. Did he then design to say to us that lamentation for the dead was wrong? Did he wish to convey to us that we should reach that mental and spiritual condition that when standing over a dying friend we would have but the feelings of parting with one who was to cross the ocean and return again. Perhaps, and it may be, when you and I shall rise from this earth state, from this world of low affections and aspirations, that we may reach that higher and better condition. Why was it not just as natural for him to be troubled in leaving his friends, and why might not they say to him, "Let not your heart be troubled?" But he would change our conception of the word death; he would introduce a new idea to soothe a troubled spirit; and to remove the ruggedness and terribleness of the dying hour he instituted a new phrase, and called death sleep, at first rejected by his disciples, because misunderstood. As we awake from the slumber of night, so death is but a slumber from which we are to awaken. But the Church is not ready for this thought. A few have

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reached it; a few have followed the Master so closely, taken in his spirit, exercised his faith, that they can look upon the form of a departed one as they can look upon one in sweet sleep; for the faith goes beyond the casket, and beyond the shroud, and traces the shining path of the ascended spirit to the realm of light, and hears the voice coming from the skies, "To-day thou art with me in paradise." It will be a long time, my friends, before you will reach this. Death is something horrible to you. Death is the king of terrors; something to be dreaded to the last degree, whether in childhood or youth or old age; something for tears and lamentations and mourning. But when the fuller life of Christianity shall come to us then shall come the realization of the words of the apostle, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ." There is something of intense sublimity in the expression, "I go to prepare a place for you." The common interpretation is that heaven did not exist prior to this, and that the Master has gone to prepare heaven. What an absurdity! Have you ever allowed yourselves to think for a moment that there had been no heaven prior to this? Certainly this is not the thought. Then others have

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suggested that the Saviour desired to teach that he was going to fit up a new world for the redeemed inhabitants of this; and thus they make heaven a place rather than a state. Doubtless it may be a Ubi—it may be a place—but the true scriptural conception of heaven is that it is a state, and that Swedenborg uttered the truth, though a half truth, when he said it was a state. He should have added the other, namely, a Ubi, or a place. But the true interpretation of this old and tender and beautiful passage is, “I go to prepare a place—that is, I go to Calvary, and there I die for mankind, and by my death and suffering I prepare a state of happiness for all that believe in my name; and if I go to Calvary, and there die, and my body enters the tomb and my spirit enters the spirit world, I will come again;” and in less than three days he came again, came from the spirit world, came from the tomb, and came to his friends, and they beheld him, they walked with him, conversed with him, dined with him, embraced him, followed him to the summit of the Mount of Olives; from which he ascended to glory. How remarkable there were no tears shed when they saw his ascending form. No lamentations awakened the echoes of the Mount of Olives; no need of the Saviour

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sending down in thunder tones, "Let not your heart be troubled." What a contrast! What a transformation had come upon these people! Forty days before it was necessary for him to nerve their courage by saying, "Let not your heart be troubled." Now, having had the proof, they behold him ascend to glory, and they shout his ascension, and they return, it is said, with great joy. It is not possible for you, my friend, to read that record as it is, in its minuteness and directness, and amplitude and power;—it is not possible for you to read this twofold record without realizing the wonderful transformation that came upon these people when they had realized a future state as an actuality. In this beautiful thought of the perpetuity of friendship he brought out the great thought of the indestructibility of individuality. If it could be proved that the old Hindu doctrine is true that at death all souls are absorbed into the divinity as drops of water into the ocean, then certainly it were not worth our while to discourse on heaven or to consider the perpetuity of human and Christian friendships. But you as an individual must always be an individual, always a unit in the units of the universe, always a person with your personal characteristics, always yourself,



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never more or less than yourself, never other than yourself. God must always be God; Gabriel must always be Gabriel; Abraham always Abraham; Paul always Paul; Luther always Luther; Wesley always Wesley; Calvin always Calvin; Washington always Washington; and there is no power in the universe to destroy individuality unless the power is tantamount to annihilation. But if God retains his individuality, and the angels theirs, why not we? We are but pilgrims and strangers here, travelers to another and a better world. So with this indestructible individuality there must come the indestructibility of our mental powers. Memory must be immortal, and there is a great truth in that utterance of Abraham to the rich man, "Son, remember;" and if memory is immortal, then certainly the evidences of earth and time are carried into the future. So with the other mental powers, imagination and judgment and reason, and so also with what we call the sensibilities, the freedom of the will, the office of the conscience, and the tendency of the affections, for there must never come a time in your eternity when you will cease to be a free agent; in other words, when you will cease to exercise the high prerogative of a volitional being. It is a fallacy, and worse than

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a fallacy, for you to suppose that, whether in heaven or in hell, there can come a time when your will shall be destroyed. So there is no such thing as the destruction of conscience, either to approve or to disapprove, or the destruction of the human affections touching those we love. This indestructibility of individuality, therefore, rises up before us as one of the grandest of truths. No matter how small you may be in your personality, limited in your intellectual capacity, it must be an infinite thought, an infinite joy to you that you must always be yourself. We are ever bound by personal identity. Indeed, personal identity enters largely into criminal jurisprudence, in human government, and whatever may be the changes of the exterior man, the recognition of the perpetuity of identity of the mind that has committed the crime is a great fact in criminal law. When it shall be your privilege, as it has been mine, to go to the Yosemite, gaze with rapture upon the bridal veil; behold it descending in the utmost beauty from the overhanging rocks; look at the zephyrs as they play with the spray and spread the same out as a bridal veil of Mechlin lace. Then look at the sunbeams as they dance on spray and water, thus acting or form-

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ing as prisms, producing the seven colors of the bow of promise. Look at the rainbow. How it abides! There it is; all its colors are distinct; but then the water is always falling, always falling. There may be a change, change in the waters, but there is the perpetuity of the light, or of the bow of promise. And it is to us a great fact growing out of the assertion of the Saviour that "where I am, there ye may be also," that he proposes to secure this eternal restoration of association and this perpetuity of friendship. Has it ever occurred to you that during the days of his flesh he was always giving back the dead to the people? He gave Lazarus back to his sisters, gave the son of the widow of Nain back to his mother, gave the beautiful damsel on the shores of Gennesaret back to her parents—always giving back the dead. What a disproportion of charity and of wisdom were it to confine these gracious gifts to these few persons, when the great heart of humanity is constantly sighing and aching for those that have passed away. What he did in these few instances he proposes to do universally, if we accept him as our personal Teacher and our divine Redeemer, and this is how he brings out in his discourses the social life of heaven. He compares it to a

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great banquet. And then this idea of personal identity and the indestructibility of individuality is ever occurring to him, and he is ever saying that we shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, these old patriarchs, bearing their names, retaining their characters—sit down with them in the kingdom of heaven. For he knew, as we should know, that if there be reunion of the blessed in disguise, then death is an eternal separation; and when we assign to the grave the form of the dear one we must say farewell, a long farewell, farewell forever. No matter whether there is immortality or not, that does not satisfy the soul or meet the argument if there is no recognition beyond the grave. Then the grave, or death, is an eternal separation; for what will it avail me if perchance in some of the happy groves of paradise I wander with my mother and know her not; if I sweep a harp of joy beside my father and know not him, a stranger to me? I may take him for an angel, I may take her for a seraph, but O when wandering through those groves, or sweeping those harps of delight, if I know that I stand by my father, or wander with my mother, what a new rapture comes to my soul! The simple question is, is heaven to

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be a land of strangers—total, absolute strangers—or is it to be a place of exalted society, the reunion of long-parted ones and the beautiful recognition of personal identity? If you and I are not to know each other, then how are we to know Christ? For the law of personal identity and of recognition touches him as well as it does my parents or any of my friends. What right have I to suppose that I will know him as the Saviour of the world and my personal Redeemer if I cannot know my precious mother and my honored father? Those who assert the opposite of this blessed recognition make an assertion that proves too much, that sweeps too far. To me and to you it is a great fact that were we deprived of this knowledge of our friends, we would be bereft of nine tenths of all the knowledge that we possess. Sum up the knowledge that you have to-night of human life and human affairs, and that knowledge gathers round some friend, some person, and is closely associated with personal identity. Then are we to enter heaven in ignorance, bereft of knowledge, and all that we have acquired on earth and time to be of no service to us? Or rather, are we to enjoy the fruition of the knowledge obtained here through those that are dearest to our heart's

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best memories? Some of the pleasantest moments of life are in the social circle, not in publicity, not amid human applause, but when surrounded with those that we can trust and those who are true to us. How the hours glide by! How eye looks into eye; how soul responds to soul! What heaven there is in these beautiful conversations as of yore! Take the sum total of human happiness, and is it not largely social; first domestic, and then social? What a small percentage of the enjoyment of human life is in what we call society, in the amusements of everyday life; but what a larger percentage, and that of the most exquisite enjoyment, is where friend holds fellowship with friend. If there is one cause why death sends a chill to our soul, it is the deprivation of the society of those with whom we have taken sweet counsel together. Now, it seems to me a law of nature, or rather a provision of nature, as it is a great truth in revelation, that the affections with which we are endowed are to have their consummation in another and a better world. Like some stately tree riven asunder by the ethereal fires or torn by the tornado from its mountain fastenings, death comes and separates us and the affections are riven and torn, for in our

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gentler moments these affections are like the tendrils that cling and entwine around some sturdy oak. I have forborne to destroy an old tree because of the beautiful vine that had gathered around the old but useless trunk. The affections of the human heart have not their consolation in this life. The events of life are so severe at times that these affections are interrupted. The Almighty can never tantilize his creatures. I took occasion to say that wherever there is an instinct there is the correlate, and so wherever there is a human love there is an object corresponding thereto. The Saviour brings out this great thought. He loved me; this love is deep, perpetual; these affections are not for earth and time, but "where I am, ye shall be also." Hence the society of heaven is to be beautiful and exalted. There Abraham shall meet his Sarah; there David shall meet his Jonathan; there Paul shall meet his Timothy; there Luther shall meet his Melanchthon; there Wesley shall meet his Whitefield; "Where I am, ye shall be also." "Shall we know each other there?" There is no skepticism in that hymn, and yet while it is a charming psalmody, and the music itself is so quieting and soothing to the soul, I fear the very question itself

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awakens doubt. But there is no truth that is so brought out in the religious and mythologies of the world as the great truth of eternal recognition. I like to read my Homer, grand, heroic old theologian of the faith of nature! There is more true theology in him than in ten thousand poets of the present time—listening to the voice of nature, embalming in poetic language the true sentiments of the soul. How he describes the descent of Ulysses into the regions of the dead, and among the persons whom Ulysses beholds is his mother.

There as the wondrous vision I survey'd,  
All pale ascends my royal mother's shade :  
A queen, to Troy she saw our legions pass ;  
Now a thin form is all Anticlea was !  
Struck at the sight I melt with filial woe,  
And down my cheek the pious waters flow.

And then with despair he exclaims, after he had extended his arms to embrace her :

Thrice in my arms I strove the shade to bind,  
Thrice through my arms she slipp'd like empty wind.

Then he exclaims :

Fly'st thou, loved shade, while I thus fondly moan ?  
Turn to my arms, to my embraces turn !  
Is it, ye powers that smile at human harms !  
Too great a bliss to weep within her arms ?

His mother then explains to him that when life leaves the body all are such as he finds her :



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No more the substance of the man remains,  
Nor bounds the blood along the purple veins:  
This the funereal flames in atoms bear  
To wander with the wind in empty air:  
While the impassive soul reluctant flies,  
Like a vain dream to these infernal skies.

And then the old epic poet goes on to describe Ulysses's interview with Agamemnon and Ajax and Sisyphus and Tantalus and Hercules. Agamemnon holds with him a long conversation, Hercules also says a few words. And thus this great master of the poetic world of the past brings out a truth that finds its parallel in the teachings of Jesus and of the apostles. How great and blessed, therefore, is this social view of heaven. I do not wonder that we sigh for its friends and long for its associations, for I suppose the majority is there and there for evermore. The Saviour then brings out this great truth that "where I am, ye shall be also," and he said to his disciples, "The way I go, ye know;" and they were surprised and responded, "We know not whither thou goest." That sharpened their eyes, flashed truth upon their understanding, lifted the veil, as it were, and prepared them for the wonderful scene of his ascension, and they shouted for joy. To me it is a great truth that those who pass from this world and join the Saviour enter

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into the same employment with him, employing their time for the good of the race. Perhaps the grandest aspect of Christ in his ascended condition is that he is man's Mediator, pleading for our race, presenting his wounded hands and side to the Father Almighty as the ground of intercession and the ground of mercy to be exercised by the Almighty. What an exalted employment! Not there singing psalms, not there offering prayers, but he is there engaged in this sublime work of lifting you and me from the sins of earth and time. How grand, therefore, is this better aspect of heaven to be associated with him in this great missionary work. Heaven to me is the largest missionary field in the world, and you saints who hope that when you die your last effort will be made, your last prayer offered, and your last solicitude for souls expressed—if you desire such a heaven, go to it! I prefer not such a state of holy indolence, of religious inactivity, but rather I prefer that aspect of the spiritual world as represented by the Saviour, touching the angels, that they are ever watching the sinner, waiting for him to turn from the error of his ways, so that they can carry the glad tidings on high that one more sinner repents. To my mind there is

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no grander aspect of the whole spiritual world than this, that there is the most profound knowledge, the most infinite knowledge, on the part of that spiritual world touching us; that there is the deepest solicitude, and there is the constant effort, the exercise of an undying energy, to rescue us here from our sins and from our errors. The ministry of angels is not definite, but it is necessary for us to receive the great assertion as taught by the Saviour that the angels come to us to whisper thoughts, to awaken emotion, to diffuse gracious influence over the mind. You and I have sometimes experienced suddenly a presence, not a visible presence, but a power. Certainly all of us have experienced the afflatus of the Holy Ghost; how he has come upon us, how he has transformed us; what moral and intellectual elevation is given, so that the whole being has been enlarged, expanded, and made powerful! So you and I have felt the presence of some one. Many a young man in the moment of temptation has been arrested from that temptation by the thought of mother. Take all the actions of his mind, all the thoughts up to that moment, and by no principle of mental philosophy can you ascertain how the thought of mother could come to his memory,

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but it flashed in the soul, and that broke the charm of the tempter, and the young man was made free by the ministry of that sainted one. Let us therefore believe in the activity of heaven, in this great missionary work here, associating ourselves forever with the Saviour and with the holy angels. Such is Christ's idea of heaven, that it is a permanent place; that it is an exalted state; that it is a heaven of activity; that is the abode of reunited ones, of exalted society; and then it is the place of the highest intellectuality conceivable, for that is a marvelous saying by the writer of the Apocalypse that when those blessed ones are contemplating the character of God they shout out, "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty!" It seems to me that a new and better conception of heaven is to come to the Church, and the sooner it comes the better—when we shall grasp it as a great reality, as a sublime fact, as a place of development and of activities. Then certainly it will not be a land of dreams or a land of shadows or a land of hope-so's, but it will come to us with the reality that Europe comes to us; it will come to us with the reality that the sunbeams come from the fountain of the sun day after day, and when this great reality shall take hold of the

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faith of the Church then shall come an uplifting, lifting us up above this world of trials and of temptation. This, then, is the great truth, my friends. Take it to your hearts; accept it as coming from Jesus. It is inseparable from his teachings: "If I go away, I will come again," and "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, ye may be also." Let us pledge each other before God and his holy angels that we will so deport ourselves, so confide in Christ by the living faith, so bear his honored cross, that we will meet him there. Meet there! Shall we know each other there? Supposing we must see him and meet him there? Does that make him unhappy? Will that make the angels unhappy? Will that make you unhappy? What right have you to meddle with the execution and administration of the divine justice? Some of the old divines have suggested that a blissful oblivion will come upon the spirit. I want no blissful oblivion; I prefer to look at the manifestation and administration of divine justice. No matter who is the victim; it is immaterial to me, for God must always do right, and that right must always be prompted by his infinite love and enveloped by his goodness. I want to say that it is enough for me to comprehend

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this great and blessed truth that all may be there, and that it is your privilege to know your friends and be with your friends, and the great question is whether you will thus resolve, by the grace of Jesus Christ, to accept this glorious truth, and have him say, "Come up higher; where I am, ye shall be also."



“So then after the Lord had spoken unto them he was received up into heaven.”

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“We will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.” *—Micah.*

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“By faith in Christ I walk with God ;  
With heaven, my journey’s end, in view ;  
Supported by his staff and rod,  
My road is safe and pleasant too.”

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“Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way ? ” *—Luke.*

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“Our conversation is in heaven.” *—Paul.*



7

## CONVERSATIONS WITH CHRIST

### XII

#### CHRIST'S CONVERSATION WITH THE TWELVE APOSTLES AT THE LAST SUPPER

“Go ye into the city ; . . . and say ye to the goodman of the house, . . . Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples ?”—Mark xiv, 13, 14.

THERE is an old tradition, that comes from the early fathers of the Christian Church, that this conversation between Christ and his twelve apostles at the last supper occurred in the town residence of Joseph of Arimathea. His ordinary abode was in Arimathea, a beautiful village of gardens and vineyards thirty miles northwest of Jerusalem on the road to Joppa. It was the birthplace of the prophet Samuel. Joseph is represented as a citizen of immense wealth. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, and as such was one of the supreme judges of the nation. He was present at the trial of our Lord, and of him it is said, “The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them.” He himself waited for the kingdom of God. As a supreme judge his palace and tomb were in the

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national capital. He was one of the personal friends of Christ, who had the courage to request the dead body of the Saviour to be interred in his own tomb. All the terms employed by the Master in giving directions to Peter and John where the last supper should be indicate the personal friendship of our Lord and this eminent jurist. He is called the "goodman of the house," and the guest-chamber is requested; the two disciples were known to the servant who was met carrying a pitcher of water, and who conveyed their message to the lord of the mansion. And it is another evidence of the lofty courage of Jesus that he selected Jerusalem, the "City of the Great King," now more than ever crowded with devout Jews coming to the passover from all parts of the world, wherein to meet his friends for a feast national in its character but personal in its application.

"Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?"

"At Bethany, the home of Mary and Martha, whose brother was raised from the dead, where Simon the leper was healed, where the alabaster box of precious ointment was broken to anoint Jesus for burial, and where thou wert ever welcome."

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He had solemnly turned away from the Holy City only two days before; would he go there again and expose himself to his enemies? But he was the King of Israel, and would assert his right to celebrate the passover in the place appointed by the law for the feast. Turning to his chosen messengers, he said, "Go ye into the city, . . . and say to the good-man of the house, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?" That guest-chamber was destined to be forever memorable; for therein the risen Christ appeared to his astonished friends, and to them he showed his feet, hands, and sides; it was the upper room to which the five hundred returned with joy and gladness after the ascension of our Lord; and therein ten days after that glorious event the promised Comforter descended in tongues of fire on the heads of the apostles.

Leonardo da Vinci has given us an immortal picture of the last supper. When all was ready there was a contention who should occupy the seat of precedence. It was the old strife revived. The Master heard the contentious murmurs, and rising from his seat of honor, rebuked the same with an act of humility never to be forgotten by assuming the



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office and performing the work of a slave. The impetuous Peter objected, but the Master gave him his choice between submission and rejection.

The feast is resumed; the passover is duly celebrated, and is supplemented by the Eucharist, commemorative of the Saviour's death. Holding in his hand a piece of the paschal unleavened bread, he broke it and said, "This is my body which is given for you;" and then holding in his hand the paschal cup filled with the red wine used at the feast, he said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." These are symbolical terms used by Christ, and mean that the bread represents his flesh and the wine his blood.

Thrice he referred to Judas, and so definitely that disguise was impossible; but when he said, "One of you shall betray me," all was excitement, for the loyalty of each was impeached. "Lord, is it I?" was the question of each. Even Judas had the effrontery to join in the interrogation. The anxiety of the company is relieved when the Master said, "The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table, and he who receiveth the sopped bread from my hand is the traitor." The ex-

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posed traitor now retires from the company of the true disciples with the Master's request ringing in his ears, "That thou doest, do quickly." Judas departs, and Christ exclaims, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him."

St. John is the sacred historian of the last supper, and records the events thereof in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of his gospel. Mark and Luke were not present, and Matthew simply recorded the Eucharistic feast; but St. John's seat is next to Christ, and leaning upon his bosom, is permitted to hear all that was said.

The conversation lasted late into the night, and was resumed at intervals throughout forty days. After Judas withdrew and all was silent the Saviour began his valadictory to those he loved. He announced his departure, and that none could accompany him. St. Peter wondered why he could not go with the Master, for he had been his companion in all his trials through three years, and was ready to die, if necessary, with him; but he was reminded of the trial that awaited him.

The crowing of the cock in the morning will announce a threefold denial, and that with oaths, that he had never known him. This re-

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vealed to the man that he had not known himself. The company was sad and needed consolation and the promise of the Comforter to be an unfailing guide. "Let not your hearts be troubled," is one of our Lord's golden sentences that have cheered the living and the dying for nineteen centuries, and will to the last syllable of recorded time. His prediction of Peter's denial and the flight of the eleven when the Master had yielded to the arrest had filled all hearts with inexpressible sadness, and this was deepened by the picture of the dangers and trials which awaited them in spreading his religion in all lands; while he was with them they had no fear of harm. All was not clear to St. Thomas, who wanted assurance that Christ himself is the way. St. Philip had listened, but could not understand that if Christ could go to the Father, why he could not also see the Father. This was childlike simplicity, to which the Saviour replied, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also, for I am the highest revelation of God, for I and the Father are one." A deeper question occurred to St. Thaddeus, a brave but reverent soul, who could not understand how Christ could manifest himself unto the world and exclude himself from all men. How can Christ show himself as the

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King immortal and invisible and not be seen by all men? His mind is illuminated by the revelation of the soul communion with the Father Almighty. To illustrate these hidden sayings the presence and power of the third person in adorable Trinity is promised to the Church and also to all believers.

To make all plain the great Teacher employs the figure of the union of the vine and its branches to show the mutual and reciprocal relation of the Infinite One with a human soul. Such redeemed spirits become the abode of God over all and blessed for evermore.

Then true to himself as the great Teacher of the world, he cannot leave his friends without a reminder that all these exalted promises are conditioned on personal love to him and obedience to his command, which is the highest expression of the fidelity of a disciple. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." I do not ask of you cathedrals or palaces or pilgrimages to my tomb, but I leave you this sacramental cup, and as often as ye drink of it "do it in remembrance of me." I do not expect that the bread and wine that you shall use at this memorial feast shall be changed by miraculous power into my

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flesh and my blood, but to be symbols of my being, and as a perpetual reminder of me I institute this holy sacrament for your comfort. It is to be a memorial feast and a sign of fellowship. As the ancient feast in the temples of all religions, this shall announce the social nature of my people and the universal brotherhood of mankind. As bread and wine are the common elements of food, and as all are pensioners on the all-Father, so this sacrament of my death will recall these great facts; and as the elements are too simple to be venerated, they are only memorials of my love. As the bread and wine are to be masticated and then assimilated into the substance of your bodies, so you are to live in me, and thus to remind you of your union with me. In this higher sense you are to eat my flesh and drink my blood and draw from me a perpetual life. You thereby become part of me, to love me as you love yourself, and this is the expression of the highest personal devotion.

When traveling in the far East I heard of an old tradition that Christ was a perfect humanity, having in himself the sturdier virtues of the man and the gentler virtues of the woman, and therefore could sympathise with all

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the human race. There was something quite feminine in his farewell to his disciples, "Do this in remembrance of me." Do not forget me, but hold me in your memory. He knew that ingratitude and forgetfulness are the twin vices of human nature. One of the greatest kings was rebuked because he had forgotten the God in whose hand was his breath (Dan. v, 23). As the Infinite One had called upon the young to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, so the Master commits his precious Gospel to the memory of his apostles and through them to mankind. He asks for no enduring mausoleum, no column of brass or marble, no sacred shrine, but a mental act so simple and natural that the king on his throne and the beggar at his gate can comply therewith. Sometimes we are invited to "reason together;" sometimes to "judge that which is right," but here we are requested to "remember." All our intellectual faculties have their appropriate work—the imagination is to conceive divine truth; reason is to investigate its claims; the judgment is to decide the value of its evidence; the understanding to comprehend the obligation imposed; and memory is to record the past and perpetuate its claims. "Do not for-

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get me," is the request of each of us. The Master herein reveals the common desire of us all, and we leave to others some token of remembrance. Jesus requested us to partake of a morsel of bread and a drop of wine, the memorials of his death.

What other of our mental faculties could be chosen in preference? How vast its receptive capacity. Confirmed by authentic facts, Cyrus could call by name each soldier in his vast army; Mithridates could speak to the subjects of each of the twenty-three nations of his empire; Seneca could recite two thousand verses in their order. Cranmer and Ridley could repeat the New Testament, and Lawson of Scotland the whole Bible. Memory is not necessary to our perception or consciousness, but is to our progress in any department of life. Without it the past would be a blank and generalization an impossibility. And more than any other of our mental powers the joys of heaven and the sorrows of hell will be enhanced by memory.

The interview was soon to end, for he informs them that "hereafter I will not talk much with you: but I will send the Comforter, who will bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." The

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Saviour then offered a prayer, fervent and touching, wherein he speaks as a God, then implores as a dependent man, then as the Mediator of his people. He intercedes as the High Priest of his nation for himself, his apostles, and then for his disciples, that they might live in peace and concord. Then the company chanted the well-known paschal psalm recorded in the Psalter, comprising the 113th psalm and the five immediately following, so appropriate to the occasion.

The night is far spent. The hymn, the prayer, and the discourses had occupied the hours. The command is given, "Arise, let us go hence, the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." "Nothing in me." What a triumph! How serene his soul; but conscious of his victory.

The hour of parting arrived. Taking leave of the goodman of the house, the company adjourned to meet in the Garden of Gethsemane, to the eastward of the Holy City. Passing along the Tower of Antonia, wherein was Pilate's judgment hall, and out of St. Stephen's Gate, one of the best known gates of the city wall, the company slowly descended the declivities of Mount Moriah to the bed of the Kidron, crossing that ancient rivulet over



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a stone bridge they had often crossed to a garden of somber olive trees that cast their shadow in the light of the paschal moon. Thither the Master was wont to retire for prayer. The night was clear and the moon was bright and the springtime air was balmy. He requested his eleven friends to tarry while he withdrew a stone's cast and kneeled down and prayed. He coveted solitude to be alone in prayer with his Father. His prayer is recorded, and was for submission to the purpose of his mission, a mental condition he had not yet attained. He had resisted Satan and conquered all his foes, but this was a victory yet to be achieved. He was to consent to die for the sins of the world. He had power to lay down his life by his own free will. There was no power in the universe that could take it from him. Could he attain to the willingness essential to the atonement? He was not afraid to suffer or to die, but could willingly offer himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world; such was his agony in the struggle that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." In his more than human effort "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And be-

ing in agony he prayed more earnestly." Then came the triumph of his soul, "Not my will, but thine, be done." Going to where his weary friends were fast asleep, sleeping for sorrow, he said to them, "Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." The sacred stillness of the hour was broken by the intrusion of Judas and a multitude to arrest him. His friends were ready to defend him, and one of them smote off the ear of the servant of the high priest; but the Master asked those who had come to arrest him, "Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him." His only defense was, "Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." The eleven friends who spent the night with him at the paschal feast, and who heard his words of wisdom, all forsook him and fled. Two followed the crowd to the palace, John and Peter; the former was known to the high priest, and through his intercession Peter was admitted within the gates. It was a trying night to our Master, who was arraigned before four judges, insulted, buffeted, mocked, scourged, imprisoned, and in the morning was

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crucified between two thieves that he might be considered the worst of the three.

Three days of suspense followed. The fishermen went to their nets and the tax-gatherer to his receipt of customs; but the women lingered near where the body of the crucified was being exposed. But soon all were thrilled with the shout, "He is risen! He is risen!" Angels in shining garments were seen in the empty tomb. Mary of Magdala, and Joanna, and the mother of James, and other women had seen him; Peter and John had been to the empty sepulcher. Two travelers had met him on the way to Emmaus and supped with him. He had appeared to ten of his friends in the upper room where he had eaten the last supper with them; then to Peter, who thrice denied him; and to Thomas, who had demanded to see his wounded side and pierced hands and feet; and to others on the seashore of Gennesaret, where they dined together. Two of the eleven received special attention in the conversation on the Galilean shore. St. Peter had denied him thrice, and thrice he was required to confess his Lord. Attention is called to St. John to gratify the inquiry of St. Peter. The Master's words had been misinterpreted, and it was necessary

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that Jesus should explain his meaning. The impression that St. John would never die was a false one and our Lord corrected it.

All the appearances of the Saviour to his apostles are not fully recorded, but from intimation we may infer that many other conversations were held between him and these eleven confidential friends. This interview on the shore of the Sea of Galilee was predicted with much minuteness by the Master and expected by his friends. "But after I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee," was his cheering promise to his disciples. The angels seen in the empty tomb by the women were commissioned to repeat the promise, "Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him." Immediately the Lord himself appeared to these holy women and said, "Be not afraid, go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me." "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them." Our English word "then" implies subsequently, for this was not their first interview, but one of many.

The last and most memorable conversation

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between Christ and his apostles occurred on the fortieth day of his earthly career, on the day of his ascension from the Mount of Olives. Capernaum, in the north, Bethany, in the south, and Olivet, opposite to Jerusalem, "City of the Great King," are to be recalled for his greatest discourses, his mightiest miracles, and his most glorious triumphs. His ascension is recorded by the four evangelists. The description by St. Luke in the gospel and in the Acts is fullest, while Matthew, Mark, and John record the fact. St. Paul quotes from the Psalms, and St. Peter declares his exaltation and the subjection of angels and all powers forever subject to him. The ascension was the appropriate consummation of his mission on earth. He was a native of the skies. He had a glory with the Father before the foundation of the world. It was the proper disposition of his bodily scene. Had he remained on our earth and died again, we could not call him conqueror of death. What favored spot could have been his abode? His ascension was the crowning proof of his divine mission. There was no room for him here. It was the pledge of our humanity to the skies. He must ascend. Like all the events of his life, this was

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also foretold. "Go tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father." Pentecost was a proof of the fact. "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endowed with power from on high."

How and where did the Master spend the forty days between his resurrection and ascension? St. Luke gives us an accurate and detailed account of the last six days of the Saviour's earth life. Would that he had given us an itinerary of these illustrious forty days. Levitation and gravitation were both equally subject to his will. Did he remain on the earth he had redeemed? Did he mingle with his chosen friends, or did he pass frequently to his heavenly home? There are intimations recorded that he remained with his mother and the blessed women who had attended him in his journeyings, and his chosen disciples, and those of the five hundred who included the eleven apostles, the seventy disciples, the virgin mother, Mary of Magdala, Salome, Lazarus and the two sisters of Bethany, Simon, the restored leper; the Bartimeus of Jericho, Joseph of Arimathea, and with Nicodemus, who had defended Christ at his trial. "He led them out as far as to Bethany." To

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the southeast is an isthmus connecting two of the prominent peaks of Olivet; and from this spot the traveler of to-day looks down upon the quiet hamlet five hundred yards below the summit. It is a Sabbath day's journey from St. Stephens's Gate, out of which the triumphal procession passed. Bethany was ever dear to the Master, and it was the last of earth that met his enraptured gaze. What a thrilling moment to him and to the five hundred who accompanied him. "He lifted up his hands and blessed them." And what a benediction to give and receive! "He was carried up into heaven." What an angelic escort! "And they worshiped him." How devout their emotion! How appropriate their act! How natural the question of the angels, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." And the joy of his departure is one of the wonderful proofs of his ascension. "And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy," not weeping at the departure of their Lord and Saviour, but "were continually in the temple praising and blessing God."

“Christ, the Alpha and Omega of the Bible—the beginning and end of the law; the sum and substance of the Gospel—the author and finisher of our faith. To him all eyes should turn, all hearts aspire, all prayer be made, all glory given. For him the prophets waited; around him gathered the devout of the earth, and from him came forth the redemption of our fallen race. He was the seer’s vision, the poet’s song, the priest’s archetype, the prophet’s burden, the apostles’ theme.”

—*J. P. N.*

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“Remember it is ours to illustrate a living, walking, talking Christ. Call in mind Thorwaldsen’s statue of Jesus, and his little girl, who, when she first gazed upon it from her father’s arms, said, ‘Papa, it looks so like my Saviour.’ Strive to resemble Christ so closely that the world may say Christians look like him—Jesus—whom they have been with, and learned of him.”

—*J. P. N.*

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“Keep in mind, dear readers, the links in the chain of the preceding conversations and weld them into your own life as I have them in my life.”

—*J. P. N.*

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St. John says of the words and sayings of Jesus: “There are also many other things which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.”



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